

for Harold and
Nathan
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The
BAR-MITZVAH PULPIT

דרשות לבר מצוה

SERMONETTES FOR
BAR-MITZVAH BOYS
AND OTHERS

Arranged According to the Sidroth
of the Torah

BY
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FOREWORD

The present volume is published at this time, because there is a real need for such sermonettes. Rabbis know the kind of "speeches" young boys are taught to deliver before large congregations.

Every paragraph is an excerpt from my Hebrew book, "The Vision of Isaiah." I do not give references, as I really want it to be studied, and delivered by young people.

The discriminating in taste will recognize the care and effort of this work, in dealing out to young Jewish children, in the English-speaking countries, the fundamental principles of Judaism in a clear, classical language.

Rabbis and preachers, may find in this work a ready fountain of pure material for longer sermons. This was my aim in picking out some gems from "The Vision of Isaiah," and exhibiting them in a setting which equals the original.

It is my belief that the Orthodox pulpit needs English sermons of this type. There are very few publications available, out of which the Orthodox Rabbi can draw upon for the use in the synagogues, which are becoming more and more filled with English-speaking worshipers.

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Brooklyn, N. Y., Tebet, 11, 5688—Jan. 4, 1928.*

*To My True and Dear Friends,
Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Lippit
This Volume is Dedicated.*

THE AUTHOR

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I.

MAN'S LIMITATIONS

בראשית

My dear parents, Worthy Members of this Sacred Congregation, Ladies and Gentlemen: As I cross the boundary-line between childhood and manhood, I feel that I am facing the stern realities of life. Of course, I am facing them with a serious mind; but with a mind full of hope, courage and determination.

I know of no better way to caution one, who parts company with one epoch and enters into another, than to show him, at the very outstart, the real difficulties he may expect to encounter. It brings home to him that life is not a child's play, as he thought it was as long as he was considered a mere child.

Only Adam had no childhood. According to the Talmud, when he was created, he could see what was going on in the world "from one end even unto another." He was in size "as a man of twenty." And, yet, he disappointed God. He was not without his shortcomings.

Adam did not keep the commandment of God.

How insignificant do I now feel, when I am facing the fulfillment of the commandments of the whole Torah, six hundred and thirteen of them!

My life, henceforth, is to be fenced in and walled off. I will not be able to go everywhere, do everything, look upon everything, hear everything, eat or drink everything. When I will lie down, rise up, sit down or walk about I will ever encounter some commandment to regulate my action, my movement, my speech, my very thought!

But I know that God intended only good for His children upon earth. He intended, in fact, did bestow, eternal life upon man; but it was through man's own shortcomings that that experience was taken away from him at the very outset of his career upon earth. Adam and Eve could not spend eternal life in the Garden of Eden. By his nature, man has some failings, some of which are his desire to work, to strive, to toil, to attain a goal, to risk, to venture and to gain.

In the few childish years that I was privileged, by the grace of Almighty, to live upon earth, I feel that very inclination in my heart and mind. Man can not be perfect, although he is endowed with a soul. The spirit of God moves him to things which are heavenly, and the body of clay, which

has so many demands upon him, drives him to things earthly. He is a composite being. It was, therefore, that Adam and Eve were bold enough to take the step which deprived them of an eternal life of leisure and brought them, instead, a short span of life full of human experiences.

It was then that the Lord said : "My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for that he also is flesh ; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years."

Behind this decree lies eternal happiness. When one lives upon earth righteously, when his span of life is rounded out in a human life which is also Godly, this world becomes to him but a preparatory school, a vestibule to that Eden which Adam lost. And, wisely did our sages say : "Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than the whole life of the world to come ; and better is one hour of blissfulness of spirit in the world to come than the whole life of this world."

For the body, life is good on this world ; for the spirit the life of the world to come is the only place of its bliss.

Now, being of an age when both my spirit and my body will soon have to function as God intended them, I feel that by observing the commandments, I will be able to have that bliss in this

world of which the sages spoke, and also the bliss in the world to come.

Above all I feel that my life's course was properly shaped by my dear parents, by my teachers, and by the entire Jewish community, which is ever watchful to teach the young, so that they shall not abandon God's teachings in old age. For this great benefit, accept my assurance that I aim to be what you want me to be; and accept my thanks for having shown me the way.

May Almighty, whose commandments I am now ready to embrace, guide my footsteps, and lead me in the path of my forefathers; may He help me to shape my conduct according to His will. I thank Thee O Lord for having preserved my life till now. Bless, I pray Thee, my parents, my brothers and sisters, and all relatives; bless in Thy loving kindness this congregation; and mayest Thou send a Redeemer to Zion, speedily, in our day, Amen.

II.

נ

Dear Parents, Worthy Members of this Congregation, Ladies and Gentlemen: The ark of my life is ready. I am now about to enter it and protect myself against the deluge which comes to every young life. My childish years were spent under the guidance of my dear parents and good teachers. They were the architects of the ark which is to save me during my life's journey. Of course, I am provided with but scanty means. I will have to be thrifty, live in moderation, and work hard in order to reach my life's goal, the destination which, only God knows, is to me a severe test even to contemplate.

Our sages aver, that Noah had jewels by which he could regulate time and know night from day. At night the jewels were very bright; in the day-time very pale. It was necessary for him to know when it was night and when it was daytime, as our sages contend, in order to be able to feed the different animals in the proper time, and to take care of them after their accustomed routine, so that their lives be spared against the time when the flood would recede, when they were expected to preserve all kinds of species upon earth.

I, too, received jewels by which I will be able to tell night from day. I am to put on phylacteries in the morning, and read the She'ma when stars appear. By believing in God, and doing good to my fellow man, as these two precious jewels teach me, I will be able to preserve the moral and spiritual soundness of my physical being. I will tend to the animal within me in a manner that it will not die before my span of life will have been spent by the will of Almighty.

When God promised, saying: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake," it is also stated in our Torah: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Evidently, before the deluge there were no seasons, no seeding and no harvest. Or, if there were, the men upon earth paid no attention to them, as special mention had to be made concerning them, by Almighty Himself, in connection with His Godly pledge.

To me, this is of special meaning. It gives me a lesson, out of which I believe, I may derive a life-long benefit. In fact, I might carve out a path, which I can follow all my life in dignity and in honor, out of this lesson.

Man, too, has seasons of cold and heat, summer

and winter, seed-time and harvest. Early youth, manhood, middle-life and old age; being instructed, gaining experience and, then, mature judgment sum up the seasons of man's career upon earth.

You, my dear parents, did all that was in your power to implant in my heart proper roots from which I hope the harvest, to be just what you wanted it to be. For all this that you have done for me, I now am even too poor in words to give you adequate thanks. I cannot even know that time will help me to fulfil any promise that I will now make, any pledge or obligation that I might now assume, without praying to Almighty for His aid. May it be Thy will, O Lord, to implant in my heart love and desire to study, perceive, pursue and practice Thy Holy Laws and Commandments. Grant me, O Heavenly Father, life and health so that I be able to carry out the wishes of my earthly parents, to crown with glory their noble ambition to see me a useful man among Thy children on earth. Bless them with Thy bounty, I pray unto Thee, give unto my parents, relatives and friends of the great good which Thou hast in store for all righteous. Bless this congregation, now assembled to do Thy will, and mayest Thou be praised and glorified once more in Thy Holy Temple in Jerusalem, Amen.

III.

הַלְלוּ

Beloved Parents, Esteemed Congregation, Ladies and Gentlemen: Our wise men relate: "Once upon a time a tourist saw a great palace in flames. 'I surmise that the palace is ownerless,' said the tourist to his companion. Just then, the owner of the palace protested, saying: 'I am the owner of the palace'."

Even so, declare our wise men, did it happen to Abraham, our forefather. Abraham continued to address the people, saying: "Think you that there is no Guide in this world?" Just then God appeared to Him saying: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee."

I, too, hear the voice of God, charging me "to get out of my childish land, the home of my childish fancy; abandon the constant watching of my parents' home; forsake my companions of childish mischief, and go to the land of serious life, to the home of Godliness, among companions from whom I will learn to lead a life of usefulness."

That, I think, is the first commandment I am called upon to fulfil. My father is no longer re-

sponsible for me; I am no longer to be considered a mere suckling to be watched over by the tenderness of my dear mother; I cease to be the object of pity and compassion, and am now facing the real hardships of life, which make a man out of inexperienced clay and spirit.

I accept the challenge of my age. I have the background to draw upon the necessary strength and will-power. I fear not life's knocks, and dread not what the coming years may have in store for me.

I believe in God. He will be my Shield. From Him alone do I expect my reward. Even though the vision before me be as full of dread and fear as that wonderful vision which our forefather Abraham saw. I know that I will be a stranger in a land that is mine for only a while. I know that I will have to face darkness; that my life will have to be pieced together from the unknown threads; I know that life is a smoking furnace, but it is also a flaming torch, and by the light of the flaming torch I will manage, with the help of God, to distinguish the pieces which are to weave out the drapery of my life.

I shall not follow the example of an Ishmael. If my hand will ever touch a fellow-being, it will be, with the help of God, an helping hand. And

if the hands of my fellow-beings will ever touch me, that touch will be a hand-shake extended in friendship and good-fellowship.

If God intends me to be long upon earth, for life is in His hand, I will try and round my life out in a manner to please Him. That, I know, will be to you, my dear parents, ample compensation in return for all the pains which you had to endure in order to carry me thus far, to the border-line of manhood.

I thank Thee, O God, for having adorned Thy people of Israel with a Torah and commandments. Praised and glorified be Thy Name for having given me of Thy munificent good. Exalted be Thy Kingdom for having spared to me my dear parents. Spare their lives. Bless them with old age, so that they might continue to serve Thee upon earth. Grant me, O Father, the wisdom necessary to choose the path of righteousness and truth, so that I be able to glorify Thy Name and serve Thee. Shower Thy blessings, I pray Thee, upon my relatives and friends, and upon this sacred assembly, and establish again, O Lord, Thy Kingdom in Zion, Amen.

IV.

וירא

Dear Parents, Worshipful Congregation, Ladies and Gentlemen: I stand before you on this day in reverence and in awe. I am at this moment becoming conscious of the realities of life, what it may mean, how its uncertainties may affect my path in the future. By my parents, by all of you dear friends, this day is celebrated as a holiday. You, my dear father, are relieved of a heavy burden. You will no longer carry my sins upon your shoulders. You, my dear mother, are freed from a difficult task. You will have no further need to keep an ever-watchful eye on me in order to keep off the dangers which childish carelessness ever pushed me on to. And you, worthy friends, are happy to receive me in your folds, to add one more soldier to Israel's sacred army who champion the cause of the Living God.

Only one without the least trace of an imagination, could remain unmoved at a time like this. I have reached the junction of my life, the last station of certainty, to entrain upon an uncertain journey with engine untested, fuel untried, breaks unoiled, and tracks unlaid. It is all burdened upon me. I even have to dig out the road-bed.

Under these circumstances I must revert to the bulk of material at hand, what my preparation till this day consists of, to find out whether I have sufficient equipment, and what, if any, my spare parts will be able to do for replacements.

I know that my road-bed is solid rock. My rails are made of the strongest alloyed steel; my engine, if properly cared for, will never wear away; my brakes, if no unnecessary speed be resorted to, are unbreakable; my equipments are of such make that I fear no competition, and the spare parts are such that they will fit in and replace any unforeseen breakage.

I am a descendant of Abraham; I was hewn from that rock; my life was given to me by Almighty God; my path is made up of truth, justice, righteousness and peace; my equipment is ready in our Torah; and my spare parts I can draw upon whenever my conduct and deeds are of Godly make. And, above all, my fuel comes from such source that none but God can stop it.

All I need is a sense of direction. But even that sense may be imparted to me by the All-Knowing God of Israel.

Fortified with all of these implements of life, and having taken charge of all these at this very moment, I feel that all I am lacking, in order to

be what God intended His children upon earth to be, is a willingness to make some sacrifice.

It is related in the Midrash Agadah: "Satan came to Abraham and said to him: "Old man, where are you taking your son who was given to you when you already had rounded out a century of life? Where is your intelligence? I want you to know that it was I who enticed you to do this foolish thing!" And Abraham replied to him: "No, I can distinguish a commandment of God from the enticing tongue of Satan. It was God who told me to sacrifice my only son Isaac." When Satan saw that Abraham can not be deceived and led astray from the Godly path, he turned his attention to Isaac, saying: "Isaac, my good lad, where are you going?" And Isaac replied: "My father is taking me to the house of learning." And Satan said unto him: "No, he is not taking you to school, but to slaughter you." Thereupon Isaac replied: "If it be so, then my father is about to carry out the commandment of God. In obeying him, I will perform a double duty. I will do as God wills, and mind my father."

And, that self-sacrificing spirit of Isaac lives till this day. Saint and martyr followed his example.

With that spirit in my mind, and with such

blood flowing in my veins, I feel that I will be able to sense the direction and find the proper path of life. This gives me, also, a reason to rejoice alike with you that I have lived till this day, when self-reliance will commence to build my real life and character. And, to complete my full confidence in the future I now face, I will invoke the blessings of Almighty.

I pray to Thee, O Architect of the world, to guide my footsteps in trailing the unknown path of life. Glorified be Thy Name forever, for having brought me till this day, when I have reached the state of manhood. Remove, I pray unto Thee, all thorns and thistles from my path. Reward, O God, my dear parents, for having taught me to know Thee and Thy munificent Providence. Bless this assembly, and redeem, I beseech Thee, Thy people from the lands of exile, and bring them with song back to Zion, Amen.

V.

חיי שרה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I now enter the sphere of Godly influence. I become a son of the commandments. I face duty.

Abraham's way of doing his duty inspires me. He never complained, never protested, unless it was against wrong, against that which was considered by him evil in the eyes of God. God promised him the Land of Canaan. He gave it to him and to his children forever. He had to perform a duty, to bury our ancient mother Sarah. He wanted a grave in the Land of Canaan. He bought the grave, and raised no protest against the Godly promise.

The Talmud tells us that God recognized that loving spirit of Abraham. Abraham wanted Canaan for his descendants as a place to live, not as a cemetery. He understood God's promise. It was to be a place for a whole nation, the grandchildren of Abraham. The gift was not for his personal gain, to be a great land owner. His fame was not to rest upon riches. It was for his posterity.

And, ever since, we are taught to regulate our action so that it might look well in the eyes of posterity. We derive inspiration from our great past and carry out our good intentions for the welfare of the future.

My past I owe entirely to my parents and teachers, to society which afforded me a clean and wholesome environment wherein to grow up, full of ambition to achieve that which might live in future ages.

Our sages of yore inform us; Abraham instituted the Morning Prayers; Isaac, the Afternoon Prayers, and Jacob, the Evening Prayers. It is said that Abraham rose up early in the morning, on that memorable morning when he was ready to sacrifice his son, and prayed. His prayer extended the life of his son. Isaac, as the Torah tells us in this week's chapter, "went out to meditate in the field at the eventide," and his prayer was answered, for, just then Rebekah came. And Jacob prayed at night, when he "lighted upon the place," and his prayer was answered, for "the Lord stood beside him."

Morning, afternoon and night; youth, manhood and old age; during every one of these periods in man's life prayer is essential. Man must ever feel the presence of God. In His presence, no evil will

come to pass. I am, therefore, happy that my first duty was to put phylacteries on my arm and upon my head during the morning prayer. In youth, both mind and body are active. They need regulation, restraint, constant care. All of these thy phylacteries do. At night no phylacteries are put on. In old age, both the mind and body are inactive. Life's experience takes out whatever evil old age might invent.

I am but a new recruit in God's army. I have yet to learn whatever life has in store for me. Like unto Abraham, I will try and do my duty without protest or murmur. Like unto Isaac I will meditate in the field of my labors, invoking God's blessings when about to enter a new sphere of activity. Like unto Jacob I will pray in dark moments, and dream always that the Lord stands by me.

I pray to Thee, Almighty, to keep me far from paths of temptation. Give me the strength and the courage to be in Thy service upon earth. Bestow Thy blessings, I beseech Thee, upon my dear and near ones. And, mayest Thou, O Lord of the universe, have mercy upon Thy chosen people Israel, Amen.

VI.

תולדות

Dear Parents, Worthy Assembly, Ladies and Gentlemen: Our sages of yore declared: There are seven things which no man under the sun can fathom and know, (1) the day of one's death; (2) the thoughts in another's heart; (3) true justice; (4) secret of life; (5) when Messiah will come; (6) the goal of mankind; (7) when tyranny will be overthrown.

Isaac said: "I know not the day of my death," as we have read in our Torah in this week's chapters. This was the preface of Isaac to the order he gave Esau for a kind of a "last feast" before bestowing his blessings upon him.

It is well known how Rebekah prepared a meal, disguised Jacob, and charged him to take it to his father and receive the blessings, instead of his brother Esau.

Isaac's last words, in giving the order to Esau, were: "That my soul may bless thee before I die." Was it really necessary to eat venison before his soul could bestow the blessings upon Esau?

The sages aver, that Isaac instructed Esau, first,

to be careful and bring only such game as belong to the Kosher groups of animals, fowl, or fishes, and second, to observe the laws concerning slaughter and inspection, if it be animals or fowl. They also tell us, that God's Shekinah rests upon a prophet only when he is in a state of joy and happiness.

Isaac knew his Esau. With all of his faults, Esau managed to honor his father. In his facial expressions, as the sages assure us, he was as innocent as Jacob. In addition, Esau was a master in the art of deception. Behind his innocent face, he could conceal murder. He was the very personification of Satan.

Rebekah, who knew all this, dreaded lest Satan himself succeed in obtaining the blessings. Isaac did not know what was in Esau's heart, any more than he knew his own day of demise.

Accordingly, the disguise of Jacob succeeded.

But when Esau protested so vehemently, Isaac reversed the blessings, saying: "Behold, of the fat places of the earth shall be thy dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above." To Jacob he said: "So God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fat places of the earth." The identical blessing to both, with but a transposition of the

words, promising Jacob first the “dew of heaven” and then “the fat places,” and Esau he promised first the “fat places” and then the “dew of heaven.”

Since Isaac said to Esau: “Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing,” how could he, after Esau’s protesting tears, reverse the phrase and give him the identical blessing which he had given to Jacob?

Jacob was interested in the “dew of heaven,” in the spiritual things more than in the “fat places,” in the material things. Esau was just the reverse. He wanted the “fat places.” That he cried for. He loved the sword, and lived by it. He wanted good hunting grounds, plenty of game. He missed the blessings because in that vicinity game was rather scarce, as it plainly appears in the Torah. Of course Isaac hoped that he would change his course of life, and desire a share in the “dew of heaven.”

But Jacob was satisfied with whatever little God gave him for the sustenance of life. His main object in life was to enjoy of the “dew of heaven.” Jacob was not interested in the flesh-pot of plenty, if it be obtained at the expense of the soul. The body is the dwelling place of the soul. The soul is part of God upon earth. The soul stands in need of the “dew of heaven.” Jacob

accepted in happiness the Torah, the real “dew of heaven.” Esau continued to hunt game in fields and forests of plenty, being contented with the “mist that came up from the ground” as food for his soul, if he had a soul.

I am an Israelite, a true son of Jacob. I pray for the “dew of heaven.” It is mine to-day. I am now a son of the commandments, which are the “dew of heaven.” I, too, received it at a feast—not a feast prepared in disguise. Satan was not at all invited. He has no place at the feast of a Bar-Mitzvah.

May Almighty God remove Satan from my path, from before me, and from behind me. And, I pray to Thee O Lord, as thou knowest the secrets of justice, the day of every one’s demise, thoughts in all men’s hearts, the scale of true justice, the secret of life, the time when the Messiah will come, the goal of mankind, even when there will be an end to tyranny, make known to me the path to love and fear Thee, so that my conduct may glorify the name of my family and the name of the people Thou hast chosen as Thine own treasure from among all nations, Amen.

VII.

וַיֵּצֵא

Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: Jacob slept upon stones, and his slumber was sweet to him. He dreamed such sweet dreams that no king, sleeping in a palace, protected by a watch every moment of the night, ever dreamt.

Some of our sages aver that he only had two stones beneath him, and some maintain that he had twelve stones.

Angels ascended and descended by means of the ladder, which was “set up on the earth, and the top of it reached heaven.”

The sages remark, that the Angels saw the same face carved out in the Throne of Glory when they ascended, as they saw sleeping upon the stones when they descended.

And God said to him: “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.”

A wanderer, who fled from the rage of a wicked brother, headed toward the home of a Pagan uncle,

dreams of being in company of Angels, in the Presence of the God of Abraham and Isaac, hearing that his children would inherit a whole country! A lonely man, sleeping upon rocks, in an open field, dreams that he is to be the founder of a God-chosen people, which will inhabit a holy land!

He did not dream concerning his immediate needs; concerning his helplessness against the enmity of his powerful and evil-intentioned brother, or about the reception which is awaiting him at the house of his uncle Laban. He dreams of generations yet unborn, of a future which is far off, of happenings which are entirely in the keeping of God.

Some of our great scholars aver, that Jacob beheld life as it is in two great forms; two rocks which stand out against man's mind and show him his limitations. One is the natural phenomenon around us, which we can see, and the other is the super-natural, that which we can not see. Physical and metaphysical.

On this day I am commanded, as my age is now ripe for the serious things in life, to put phylacteries on my arm and upon my head. I venture to say, that the hand represents the physical, and the head, the human mind, the metaphysical.

Being but a young lad, I can best understand it by saying, that things earthly, that which we must have, and do obtain by means of labor, is one rock upon which we must lie down when we reach a parting of the ways; and that which we obtain by thinking, by our mind, is the other rock. Wisely did some of the sages maintain that all of the stones became one stone. The physical and the metaphysical, the hand and the mind are, in reality, one rock on our path.

Only by dreaming of things Godly, only by spending our life's dream in things which are of eternal worth, and only by keeping a check and a balance upon all things which are but temporal, can we establish, or rather, set up the ladder of our lives upon earth so firm that it might reach out to heaven and become a means of communication for Angels, who will see the same image upon earth as they see carved out in the Throne of Glory!

In my fancy of inexperience, I, too, dream of a future. I do not dream of untold treasures, or of matchless pleasures; as such things do not come in the lives of dreamers; they rather belong to that section of the human fraternity which can grasp with their arm and arms everything, to bring to them temporal enjoyment. They are a class which

put on but the phylactery on the hand, and do not want to even know that there is a phylactery to put upon the head. And, even the phylactery that they put on, is but an empty case, lodging none of the excerpts of the Torah. The strength of their arm and arms is ungodly.

I pray that Almighty God grant me the necessary wisdom and courage to keep steadfast to my resolutions of this day, and that He aids me in my efforts to unite body and soul in an honorable union, so that in my success you, my dear parents, and you, ladies and gentlemen, will be glorified, Amen.

VIII.

וישלח

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Midrash Agadah, in its comments on the chapters of the Torah we just read, informs us that Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, of whose demise the Torah makes mention along with the chief events in Jacob's life of wanderings, was really the mother of Rebekah. She, as it has been asserted, was the daughter of Uz, the first-born son of Nahor, brother of Abraham. She married her uncle Bethuel. How Deborah was added to Jacob's family during his sojourn with Laban is explained this wise: Rebekah did not intend to have Jacob remain with Laban any great length of time, for it is recorded in the Torah, saying: "And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forgot that which thou hast done to him; then I will send, and fetch thee from thence." But when Rebekah did inform him that it was safe for him to return, he refused to leave Laban. Rebekah then asked her mother, Deborah, to go to Laban and "fetch Jacob from thence."

The Midrash also gives a reason why no mention

of Rebekah's demise is made in our Torah. It was on account of Esau her son. It is, moreover, stated that Rebekah was buried at night, so that people will not make comment, saying: "Behold there are the remains of a mother who gave birth to such evil-doing son as Esau."

In all human speech there is no sweeter word than the word—mother. And, yet, how great is the pain of a mother even when she has the pride of rearing a wise son! A thousandfold is her pain magnified when she gives birth and has to raise a wicked son.

What a great mother Rebekah was! She evidently hated to have people remind one another of the fact that she was the mother of an Esau. Much as she loved to hear the sound of the name Jacob, her soul rebelled at the thought of having a public funeral, when people, no doubt, would also have made mention of the fact that she was the mother of Jacob, because it is the nature of people to speak more often of the evil than of the good.

To me, on this day, the day when I take off the responsibility for my sins from the shoulders of my dear father, this lesson of Rebekah, as a mother, and her two sons, Jacob and Esau, is of the greatest significance. It is true that I will be responsible

for my sins; but should I, God forbid, not follow the path of righteousness, the heavy burden of it all would fall upon the shoulders of my sweet mother.

A mother's love is stronger than her pain; there is nothing under the sun that a son could do which a mother is not ready to condone. Rebekah was not afraid of having her pride touched; but she was afraid of being blamed for not doing better by Esau, in order to make him a better man. A mother knows. She is the first to feel whenever a son goes astray. Only she believes that it is really not her son who perpetrates a crime, commits a sin, or goes in bad company. Her boy is always good, only bad boys mislead him. It is not blind love. It is a part of a mother to believe so, to be so. Esau could, and did, deceive his father; but he could not deceive his mother. She carried her pain silently to the grave.

On the day I become a son of commandments—Bar Mitzvah—I assume the obligation to put on phylacteries on my arm, and upon my head. You, my dear father, looked out to have my mind developed; and you, my dear mother, looked after my physical needs. Daily, when I put on the phylactery on the arm, I think of you, dear mother, who are to me a pillar of strength, my arm; and when I put on the phylactery upon my head, I

think of you, dear father, who are to me the very embodiment of all that is spiritual in life.

I promise you, dear parents, that my mind and my arm will not be used to aught but honorable ends.

I pray to Thee Almighty God, Father of us all, to help me in this resolution to be steadfast therein, not to stumble and bring added pain to my mother and shame to my father. I beseech Thee bless them both, and grant them long life and happiness. Bless our whole family. Bless this worshipful assembly, and bless all Israel with Thy blessings from Zion, Amen.

IX.

וַיֹּשֶׁב

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Midrash, in its comment on the chapters of the Torah which we read this morning, makes this statement: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you," saith the Lord. The brothers, who are to be the twelve tribes of Israel, are busy selling Joseph; Jacob and Joseph are busy with their troubles, Judah is busy with his matrimonial affairs, but the Holy One, blessed is He! is busy to create the light of Zion's Redeemer! Thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope! even as Jeremiah said."

To my unripe mind, it appears that the sages of the Midrash made not only a wise comment, but gave a wonderful interpretation of the many-sided events described in the chapters of the Torah which were just read to us.

A brother dreams; brothers are jealous; a father discriminates in favor of one son, by making him a coat of many colors; jealousy is turned into hate; a brother is sold in captivity as a slave, and a father is led to believe that his most beloved son is dead,

by dipping his coat in the blood of a he-goat, reporting to the father that that was what they found left of Joseph. The father believes that the son was torn to pieces by an evil beast, but refuses to be comforted. An evil-minded woman brings false charges against Joseph, and he is cast into a dungeon.

Jacob, the plain man, who dwelt in the tents of the Torah, suffered a lifetime of intrigue, jealousy, hatred, hard work, cold by night, heat by day; and experienced during his lifetime, before he could enjoy few years at his old age, much more than Abraham and Isaac did during their lifetime.

And, according to the Midrash just quoted, during that time, God created the light of Zion's Redeemer!

But what is the light of Zion's Redeemer?

The drama which this part of our Torah unfolds is symbolic of the career of Israel in exile, of Israel the persecuted, Israel the captive, Israel the sufferer, Israel the martyr, Israel the faithful and Israel the triumphant.

A young lad begins his life as a dreamer. Dreams come true. Not the moment one commences to dream. Some dreams are forgotten even a thousand years, and when they become realities it often

happens that the dream itself has been forgotten by most men, and the record thereof must be looked for in age-stained pages of the history of mankind.

Abraham Zaccuto dreamed of a new continent. Columbus used the chart prepared by Zaccuto. The dreamer is almost forgotten, although the dream is realized now by more than one hundred millions of happy human beings, among whom are about four millions of Zaccuto's brethren.

The despair of Jacob, the hopelessness of Joseph, the apparent panic among the brothers after their deed was accomplished, would have disrupted any family, would have disheartened most people, would have terminated the whole of Jacob's ambitious program of becoming the real founder of a God-chosen people.

But the Midrash also tells us that God had promised Jacob that none of his sons would die during his lifetime. He, therefore, refused to be comforted, or receive condolence, as such is not done for the living. He believed in God, trusted God's promise. He had the blood-stained coat of many colors as evidence, and he himself pronounced, upon seeing it, that an evil beast tore Joseph to pieces. But he refused to believe in his heart of hearts that Joseph was actually dead.

Joseph was not dead. His soul was torn to pieces. He was in a dungeon. He was in an Egyptian environment. He was a captive, as a result of a false accusation. But Joseph was alive. Jacob said: "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces."

Israel at times is torn to pieces; his body torn by evil beasts, and his soul by internal disruption, by divisions, by disagreements. But Israel ever sees the light of Zion's Redeemer. He never gives up hope. Like unto Jacob, the people of Israel mourn for the Joseph who is torn to pieces; but even like unto Jacob it believes God's promise that death will not overtake Joseph the dreamer.

The drama is unfolded, everything looks gloomy, everybody expects the climax to be attained in the form of a tragedy. But a light appears; hope enters; from a distance a ray pierces through the iron walls of the dungeon. Indeed, wisely did the sages comment: "The brothers, who are to be the twelve tribes of Israel are busy selling Joseph; Jacob and Joseph are busy with their troubles; Judah is busy with his matrimonial affairs; but the Holy One, blessed is He! is busy to create the light of Zion's Redeemer." Even as Jeremiah said: "For I know the thoughts that I

think toward you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Now, standing before you, on this day when I formally enter the folds of Israel, with these thoughts in my heart, I have no misgivings. I am inspired by this heavenly drama of our Torah. Nothing that may ever come to pass in the course of my life will cast a gloom over me; for I will always see the far-off ray of light of Zion's Redeemer. May my father and mother, and all of you friends, relatives and the worthy congregation live to behold that light when God will release it, Amen.

X.

טקה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: We read in our Torah this morning: "And their father Israel said unto them: 'If it be so now, do this: take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spicery and laudanum, nuts and almonds; and take double money in your hand; and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks carry back in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight; take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man'." The Midrash, commenting thereon, informs us that when Jacob was through giving his sons these instructions the sons still refused to go. He then asked them: "Why are you now tarrying, what more do you desire in order to make a start?" And they replied: "We stand in need of your blessing." Jacob then said: "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your other brother and Benjamin." And, the sages of the Midrash give a unique interpretation to this blessing which Jacob bestowed upon his sons before they departed for Egypt with their brother Ben-

jamin, saying: "The 'man' spoken of in the blessing is none other than God, who is called 'Man of War'." "Your other brother" Jacob, prophetically, referred to the ten tribes of Israel; and "Benjamin," therein spoken of, refers to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin." Another interpretation is given to this blessing as having reference to the destruction of the First and Second Temples. That is to say, Jacob prayed that "release be given" to their children from Babylonian exile and from the exile we are now in.

Jacob knew that at the time God made a covenant with his grandfather, Abraham, a yoke of bondage, lasting four hundred years, was then decreed against his children, with the promise that they would be liberated in triumph, and that their oppressors would be punished.

Jacob could not see the beginning of that bondage, until his sons first had to go to Egypt. He saw the tragedy of his children coming on. When Joseph was lost on an errand, he continued to mourn; yet, hoping against hope that he would return to him. But when his sons finally got his consent to take with them his last son, he realized that the years of exile and slavery are approaching. Canaan was not a strange land. Wandering from place to place in one's own land is not exile, not bondage. But Egypt was a strange land.

There is nothing that can be done against the judgment of God. But there is the far-off hope to lighten the burden.

His sons, too, knew of God's decree. One of them being in prison in a strange land, they themselves being under obligation to bring their youngest brother in a strange land, the strange experience with the overlord of Egypt, and their own troubled conscience gave them the feeling of bondage. They feared that that would, perhaps, be the real beginning of the decreed yoke of bondage.

Fearing that their present departure was on uncharted path whence they would no more return to freedom and liberty, they hesitated to go without their father's blessing. And Jacob did bestow the anticipated blessing. They would need the help of the "Man of War"; He would bring them forth, liberate them; He would have mercy on them in exile; their brothers would be restored to them from the lands of exile.

Jacob and his sons, unconsciously, forged the golden chain of hope which finally brought the first seventy souls of Israel into the land of Egypt, and chained them in irons to a yoke of bondage.

But when they went forth out of Egyptian bondage, the seventy souls of Jacob's household in-

creased in number to six hundred thousand men of twenty years and over—a mighty nation, heading for world renown, unmatched in the annals of mankind.

I, too, am now going forth on an errand to seek my brothers and join them. I face the yoke of life, the bondage that every righteous man must experience during his span of life which is but of seventy years' duration.

You, my dear father, did pronounce a blessing—you praised God being released from the burden of my sins. But I, nevertheless, know that in my life's battle you long since blessed me to be under the protection of God, the Only Man of War. You taught me to revere Him, to love Him, and to fear Him.

May He protect and guide me, and release my brethren from the lands of bondage; may He bless you, my dear father, and you, my dear mother; may He bless this entire assembly with the blessings of Jacob and with the blessings of Zion, Amen.

XI.

וַיֹּאמֶר

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is related in the Talmud that, when Joseph saw his brother Benjamin he asked him: "Are you married?" and Benjamin answered him: "Yes, and I have ten sons." And Joseph again asked him: "And what are their names?" And Benjamin replied: "I have named them all for you my brother; Bela, because we thought you were swallowed up among the nations; Becher, because you were the first-born of our mother; Gera, because you are a stranger in a strange land; Naamon, because all of your deeds are sweet; Ehi, because you are my true brother of one father and one mother; Rosh, because you are my chief; Muppim, because you are good to look upon; Huppim, because neither you were present when I stood under my canopy at the time of my marriage, nor I under yours; and Ard, because you are the blossoming rose in our garden of flowers."

Benjamin was not a flatterer. Neither was it the time to throw bouquets. Two brothers meet after such long and tragic separation, and the first questions asked were of such nature which do not

at all reveal the inner feelings, particularly of Joseph. What difference would it have made, had Benjamin called his sons by any other names? And why was it essential for Joseph to know their names?

The Midrash also informs us that the reason why Jacob sent his son Judah ahead of the rest of the family was to organize and make ready a school where to instruct his whole family in the Torah.

Judah was the king among his brothers. Joseph was vice-king of Egypt. He, therefore, was of a proper rank to greet Joseph on behalf of the whole family. This, too, is a contention of the Midrash, and can be very well understood. But to take away the time of the king of the family and make him an errand-boy for the sake of a Talmud Torah, if we should measure it with the present-day standard, seems, to say the least, a bit unreasonable. Moreover, there is no record that Judah protested, or that any one else of Jacob's family raised a protest against Judah for having failed in his task. Jacob did find a ready school-house for the whole family. And, this very satisfactory condition should draw some comment, particularly why was the king of the brothers selected for such mission?

Jacob was brought to Egypt by means of a

golden chain of love. He entered into Egypt in triumph. He came to the overlord of the land, who invited him; and that overlord was his son, his beloved son, who, as we know, had been considered torn to pieces by an evil beast. To say the least, the evil beast of jealousy had torn the brothers to pieces.

Brothers must have something in common, must share some ideal, or aim in common. At least their viewpoint on life must be held in common. It is evident that Joseph had very few things in common with his brothers; some of whom being entirely different, in almost everything, than he.

Joseph, of course, was distrusting his brothers, in so far as his own experience with them was concerned. He greatly desired to know how his own young brother was influenced by them. Whether or not he shared their opinions about himself, particularly about what opinion they had formed in his mind concerning himself. Benjamin, of course, loved his brother Joseph. But Joseph was not sure as to what the talk of the brothers was about him during his absence.

When Benjamin told him that he was the father of ten sons, Joseph became uneasy, lest his brother's sons fail to agree among themselves, and had nothing in common. His delight, however, knew no

limit when his brother told him that all his sons had a lot in common, and the centre point of their harmony was their uncle Joseph. Their very names were of such significance as would hold them united.

Jacob, too, wanted to leave his children and grand-children united in one common cause. He knew that he was going in captivity, and he knew what was in store for his descendants. He also knew that the brothers first resented Joseph's dreams, because they betokened sovereignty, whereas that title had already belonged to Judah.

Coming into Egypt he wanted to prevent any further cause for jealousy among the brothers. Joseph was the ruler of the land. His dream was realized. He, therefore, told Judah: "Now go you ahead of us. The dominion of government now belongs to Joseph. But there is a greater crown for you—the crown of the Torah. Go to Egypt. Establish there a place for the instruction of the Torah. Be king in that sphere of noble work. Around the Torah all of your brothers will gather as one, and remain united."

I now stand before all of you with the banner of the Torah firmly in my grasp. I am now a son of the commandment. I am to observe the com-

mandments of the Torah in common with all my brethren.

I thank Thee, O Lord of my fathers for having implanted in my heart love for the Torah; I beseech Thee Almighty to strengthen me in my tender youth and keep me out of the ways of temptation. Bless, I pray Thee, my father and my mother; bless my whole family, my relatives and my friends; bless this entire assembly, and bring comfort to the Widowed daughter of Zion, speedily, in our day, Amen.

XII.

וַיֹּאמֶר

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Torah, in the chapters just read to us, relates: "And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said: 'Who are these?' And Joseph said unto his father: 'They are my sons, whom God hath given me here.' And he said: 'Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them'."

The Midrash states that at the moment when Jacob was about to bless the children of Joseph, the Shekinah departed from him. And Jacob was sorely afraid, lest there be some question as to their fitness. It was for this reason that he asked: "Who are these?" But Joseph answered and said: "They are my sons, whom God hath given me here." Joseph, thereby, told his father, that although they were born to him in Egypt, they are "my sons," as fit to receive his blessings as he is himself.

The Torah, continues saying: "And he blessed them that day, saying: 'By thee shall Israel bless, saying: God make thee as Ephraim and as Menasseh.' And he set Ephraim before Menasseh."

Why did Jacob employ the singular term in saying: "By thee," seeing that he blessed them both at the same time? And why does the Verse repeat that he set Ephraim before Menasseh, seeing that he said: "God make thee as Ephraim and as Menasseh?"

Our sages aver that the interpreter between Joseph and his brothers, when he acted as a stranger to them, was Menasseh. Evidently Menasseh was endowed with the Egyptian culture. They also aver that the messenger who informed Joseph of his father's illness was Ephraim, who daily came to his grand-father Jacob for instruction in the Torah. Evidently, Ephraim was a great scholar in the Torah.

Jacob valued the Torah to the exclusion of everything else; but he knew that in addition to the Torah, his children will have to get along with peoples of other cultures. He, therefore, was not against worldly learning and culture.

But Jacob wanted to leave a proper path to be followed by future generations, a path for his children who will be sojourners in foreign lands, in alien environment. Above all he desired to give a standard in Jewish education for future generations.

He knew that Ephraim's way is good; but there is something lacking. A man is not completely educated in a worldly sense by remaining completely strange to the knowledge of the world, by not knowing the arts and sciences of the rest of the people of the world. He also knew that culture is good; but it is the most dangerous path for Jews to know only the culture of the nations among whom they live, to the exclusion of a thorough knowledge in their own Torah and wisdom.

Jacob, therefore, blessed Joseph's sons this wise: "By thee shall Israel bless." That is to say, when the Torah of Ephraim and the culture of Menasseh will be combined in one, then will Israel consider it a blessing. That is the reason why Jacob employed the singular term in blessing both of his grand-children.

Now, one might say: "I will educate my child first in worldly knowledge, and then I will instruct him in Judaism." That is he will set up Menasseh before Ephraim. This peradventure Jacob foresaw, and in order to point out his disapproval, the Torah repeats: "And he set Ephraim before Menasseh."

My dear parents endeavored every effort to carry out Jacob's wish in bringing me up. To my Hebrew teachers I owe my knowledge in our

Torah, the "Ephraim part" in my being; and to my secular teachers I owe my worldly knowledge, the "Menasseh part" in my being.

Thus equipped, I face the future with a step of security, knowing that Almighty God, in Whom I believe and Whom I trust, will look with favor upon my firm resolution to enter His service without the least thought of failure. May He bless you all, and bring joy to all Israel, Amen.

XIII.

שמות

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the chapters of the Torah read this morning it is related as follows: "And the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten saying: 'Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your appointed task in making brick both yesterday and to-day as heretofore?' Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying: 'Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us: Make brick; and, behold, thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people.' But he said: 'Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say: Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks'."

Our sages, by way of comment, contend that the officers who went to interview Pharaoh had Scrolls of the Torah in their hands, which they refused to let out of their sight even a moment. The sages also maintain that the children of the tribe of Levi were exempt from the task of making bricks. Phar-

aoh, in mocking their constancy in the belief of God and in His Torah, therefore, told them: "Ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say: Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord."

The Midrash Agadah, in interpreting the reason why the chapters we read this morning begin by reciting the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt with Jacob, says: "Every man has three kinds of names; (1) the one which God gave him—Man; (2) the one his parents gave him; (3) and the one he acquires by his own labor during his lifetime.

Every human being is presumed to be a descendant of Adam; he, therefore, at his very birth, finds the name God gave him, awaiting and ready for him. He then receives a name from his parents, by which he becomes known among his brothers and fellows. A third name he must make for himself.

When a serpent is born, everybody knows at once that it will grow up a serpent, do the work of a serpent, and die a serpent. When a dove is born, everybody knows that it will lead the life of a dove, and die a dove. But when a man-child is born no one knows what it is going to be. It might be named Saint, and grow up to be Satan. God called it man, but by his own conduct, when the child

grows up, might be a beast. In having the name his parents gave him if, by his own evil, he acts the part of a beast, that name merely shames them.

The children of Israel were men by the decree of God; they honored Jacob long after his demise in bearing the names he gave to them; and they gained names of their own account by their great achievements.

This is to teach us that the sons of Jacob, in being thus afflicted, in being slaves of the Egyptians, were not to be judged as being in a class which deserves punishment. Before relating of their suffering the Torah tells us as follows: "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt with Jacob; every man came with his household." To teach us, first, that each one of them deserved the name of man God bestowed upon him; second, that they carried with honor and dignity the names their father Jacob gave unto them; and, third, that they became famous by their own achievements.

By unanimous consent the tribe of Levi was set up to teach the rest of the tribes. And they all "waxed exceeding mighty." They set up a new civilization in Egypt. Every member of the race was distinguished from the Egyptian in belief,

mannerism, speech, dress and name. And the Egyptians feared them.

They were then put to the hardest test of all times. Free men, descendants of princes and scholars, were forced to perform tasks heretofore untried by human beings. A liberty-loving race, whose very life depended upon freedom of movement and locomotion, was cast into a pit of slavery, chained to narrow confines of their places of hard labor, and forced to undergo all sorts of degradation. And, notwithstanding all, that race stood the test.

When a demand was made by their leaders, Moses and Aaron, to let them have a short holiday in order to serve their God with proper ceremony, the request was not only refused, but the common task was hardened by taking away the straw, and by forcing them to produce the same number of bricks. And, to add insult to the injury, Jewish officers were appointed to see to it that the new edict is carried out by the slaves.

That generation of Israelites made a name for itself. They were denied the right of man, but they acted as man never before, nor ever after, did or will act under similar circumstances. There is nothing to show that that generation ever protested against the tribe of Levi, which was exempt

from work; but there is enough evidence, the very fact that the slaves desired to serve God, is proof in itself, that whenever their yoke was a bit loosened they utilized their moments of leisure in the study of God's Torah.

Of all this I was reminded when I put on the phylacteries on my arm and upon my head. My determination is, therefore, doubly fortified to deserve the name of man God gave me; to bear in honor the name my parents gave me; and to achieve during my lifetime a name for myself.

May Almighty aid me to be true to my determination, and keep me steadfast therein. I pray Thee, O God of my fathers, be my Guide and Keeper, my Light and my Shield in times of plenty as well as in times of need. Shower Thy blessings upon the heads of my parents, relatives and friends; bless this congregation, and the whole house of Israel with the blessings from Zion, Amen.

XIV.

וְאַתָּה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The portion of the Torah which was read this morning begins as follows: "And God spoke unto Moses, and said unto him: 'I am the Lord; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My Name Jehovah I made Me not known to them'."

The Talmud extends this by the following recital: "The Holy One, blessed is He! said unto Moses: 'I have said unto Abraham: Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it; yet, when he needed a grave for his wife Sarah he could not obtain it, save by paying for it four hundred shekels of silver, but he did not say to Me: 'What is Thy Name?' and he did not question My will. I have also said unto Isaac: 'Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father'; yet when his shepherds wanted to dig a well to get water, they were unable to do so till they had a quarrel with the shepherds

of Gerar. I have, moreover, said unto Jacob: 'The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; yet when he wanted to pitch his tent he found no place until he paid for a parcel of ground a hundred pieces of money. And, neither Isaac nor Jacob asked Me: 'What is Thy Name?' And they did not question My will. But thou, at first said to Me: 'Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them: The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me: What is His Name? What shall I say unto them? And now thou sayest unto Me: 'Lord, wherefore hast Thou dealt ill with this people?' Thereupon Moses accepted the judgment of God not to enter the Holy Land."

Moses loved his people. He saw their suffering. He knew that such burden they could not stand very much longer. "Making brick without straw, and deliver the tale of brick as heretofore," was an impossibility. He expected a calamity, the kind even the Pharaohs did not, at first, plan. God made him His messenger. He was ready to stand any punishment himself so long it would be of benefit to the people of Israel. He knew he sinned against God in speaking thus to Him. But to save a whole people, he was ready to sacrifice

himself. He expected a fate worse than the one decreed against him.

Of course, no one can attain the height of Moses even in his ordinary human conduct; but every one can try to follow his example of self-sacrifice, of doing a duty right, of carrying patriotism to the goal of possibility.

How happy is my lot, under God's mercy and loving kindness, to be able to stand here before you with such wonderful examples before me! I am now able to perform my duty as a member in the house of Israel. I am now a son of the commandment. I am now under duty to observe the Torah, the Torah which God gave unto Moses upon Mount Sinai. And, with a heart full of hope I approach the Throne of Glory in prayer. May He, to Whom Glory belongs, be blessed for having guided my life till now. I pray to Thee, O God, to continue to shield me against all evil. Bless my dear parents, and all my family, and all of you, worthy assembly; and may He send salvation to Israel and Zion, Amen.

XV.

א

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I appear to-day in a new light, even before my near and dear ones, who know me since my birth. They all look upon me, as if I had just arrived from a far-off land, and come to pay but a brief visit.

My own dear mother looks upon me as if I was a stranger, just arrived to give her joy without the least pain.

And it is true. In the form that I now appear, and in the manner that I now must act, I am a stranger in your midst. Time imposed upon me the solemn obligation to bid farewell to a period of my life, to which I can never return. My childhood is gone.

The human being is born more helpless than any other living creature under the sun. Consciousness, locomotion, mastication of food, speech and self-help comes to the human being after a process of growth and development.

At thirteen, it was declared by the sages of yore, the man-child should be responsible for his actions. The sense of responsibility, at that age, is supposed

to have developed to a degree of being able to tell right from wrong, as society standardized it.

Our religion teaches us that, at the age of thirteen, the man-child should commence to observe all of the commandments of the Torah. Two commandments in particular were singled out for the boy of thirteen. One regarding the phylactery on the arm, and the other regarding the phylactery upon the head.

Both of these commandments are carried out simultaneously. The phylactery on the arm is a token; the phylactery upon the head is a reminder.

Rabbi Jacob, author of the *Turim*, says: "The phylactery upon the head is called in Hebrew, *Totophot*, which is not a Hebrew but an Aramaic word, and means an instrument by which one can see far off in the distance.

One, whosoever puts on the phylacteries, and delivers the morning prayers, will not go to his business to cheat, or to his shop to betray. Unless that one be a real hypocrite. But that would not be the fault of our religion.

It is stated in our Talmud that a father must teach a son a trade or vocation. The hand, which is man's tool of labor, if it is kept within the limits of the token of the phylactery of the arm, will not be used to rob, to shoot, or to be lifted in violence.

The greatest curse of the adolescent boy is evil speech, evil thought and evil company. The phylactery of the head is rightly described as a far-seeing instrument. It is teaching the boy at thirteen to have his thoughts pure, live clean, and remain only in such company which is wholesome for his development as a man.

Our Torah, in the chapters which were read to us this morning, in giving the symbolic meaning of the phylacteries, says: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes."

Our sages tell us: "The eyes are the agents of the heart." The phylacteries are intended to remind one not to turn after the cravings of the heart, which always lead man to destruction.

Realizing this, it is no longer a mystery unto me why the sages ordered that on attaining the age of thirteen years the boy, as the first change in the routine of his young life, shall put on phylacteries.

And, as I now embark on a journey on an unfathomed and uncharted sea, I will pray to Almighty:

I beseech Thee, O Lord of the universe, to grace me with Thy help whenever I will call upon Thee.

Thou art near unto all supplicants. Be near unto me, that Thy presence shall lead me in the path of my fathers. Bless, I pray Thee, my dear parents who gave of their best to raise me as Thy servant. Reward them for their constancy and benevolence. Bless all my relatives and friends who are here to grace my holiday. They are all here for Thy sake. Bless this congregation, now gathered to do Thy bidding and worship Thee. Bless the people of Israel in whose keeping Thou hast entrusted the Torah and Thy commandments. May we all see the redemption of Zion, Amen.

XVI.

בשלה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Midrash, in commenting upon the Verse, which was read this morning, saying: "God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines," interprets this Verse in a very singular light.

"God led them not by the way of the land," means: "He did not follow, in His dealings with them, the customs of the world. It is the custom of the world that the servant carries the master; but the Holy One, blessed is He! did not follow that custom, even as it is said: 'And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bore thee, as a man doth bear his son', and as it is again said: 'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings'."

"It is the custom of the world that a servant bathes his master; but God did not follow that custom; He even reversed it, as it is said: 'Then washed I thee with water; yea, I cleansed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil'."

"It is the custom of the world that the servant assists the master in putting on his clothes; but God

did not follow that custom, even as it is said: 'I clothed thee also with richly woven work.'

"It is the custom of the world that the servant aids his master in putting his shoes on; but God did not follow that custom, even as it is said: 'And shod thee with sealskin.'

"It is the custom of the world that the servant lights the way for the master; but God did not follow that custom, even as it is said: 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light'."

Our blessed Talmud teaches us that there are three who are responsible for every one's being upon earth—God, the father, and the mother.

God gave me my soul; you, my dear parents, gave me my body; to God, I am now called upon to dedicate my life's service, as I am singled out by the name Bar-Mitzvah; to you, my dear parents, I am now called upon, by the very soul that my Father in Heaven gave me, to express my gratitude.

You, my dear mother, even as God did when He led the people of Israel through the wilderness, in not following the custom of the world, so beautifully expressed in the Midrash just quoted, re-

warded me during my childhood. You bathed and anointed me; you shod and clothed me, you carried me when I could not walk; you guided my path by day and by night so that I should not stumble and hurt myself.

In addition to all of this, you nursed me when I was sick, and kept me out of harm's way when I was well; in infancy your very life's blood was my food, and, till this day, your efforts are in every meal I partake; when I made the first step your heart danced for joy, and the next moment, when I fell, your eyes had tears thinking I was hurt; when you saw the first tooth in my mouth you thought yourself happy, but my cries at night, because of the pain accompanied at teething, kept you awake and caused you misery; when I took the first spoonful of food with my own hand, you cried out with delight, but a moment later your delight was turned into fear, lest I be sick of that which I swallowed down. Only you yourself can feel and forget; as only a mother can take compensation in pain, anxiety, fear and hard labor.

I am unable to express gratitude to you, my dear father. You were God's custodian of my soul these thirteen years. My misdeeds were charged to your account. You gave me whatever education I have. All that I know of God and His Torah, I owe to

your efforts. You, my dear father, were to me the dew of Heaven, as my mother was to me my Guiding Angel upon earth.

And, as God is your Heavenly Father as well as mine, may He be praised and glorified this day for having spared us. May He, in His Infinite wisdom, bestow upon you, my dear parents, upon you, dear friends, and upon you of this worshipful congregation, His blessings from Zion, Amen.

XVII.

יתרנו

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: Our blessed Talmud tells us: "It is said in the Torah: 'And they stood at the nether part of the mount'; That is to teach us, that the Holy One, blessed be He, covered the mount arch-like over the heads of the people of Israel, saying to them: 'If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, therein shall be your grave'."

God did not threaten them. They had accepted the Torah, before they knew its contents, even as it is said: "And they said: 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and obey'." The Talmud merely repeats a historical truth, namely: That if the people of Israel had refused to accept the Torah, their graves would have been dug for them at Mount Sinai.

Indeed, the present physical, moral and social condition of the Jews must be a miracle. We can come to no other conclusion. Had they continued, from the destruction of the Second Temple down to the present day, in some such national state as we find the Chinese, walled off from the rest of the human family, and by their selfishness on a nation-

al scale and their repulsion of alien elements resisting every assault from without, in the shape of hostile invasion, and from an overpowering national pride forbidding the introduction of new and foreign customs, we should not see so much miracle interwoven with their existence. But such is not their state; far from it.

They are neither a united and independent state, nor a parasitic province. They are peeled and scattered into fragments; but like broken pieces of quicksilver, instinct with cohesive power, ever claiming affinity and ever ready to amalgamate.

Geography, arms, genius, politics and foreign help do not explain their existence; time, and climate, and customs equally fail to unravel it. None of these are, or can be, springs of their perpetuity.

They have spread over every part of the habitable globe; have lived under the reign of every dynasty; they have shared the protection of just laws, the oppression of cruel ones and witnessed the rise and progress of both; they have used every tongue and have lived in every latitude.

The snows of Lapland have chilled, and the suns of Africa have scorched them.

They have drunk of the Tiber, the Thames, the Jordan and the Mississippi. In every country and

in every degree of latitude and longitude we find a Jew.

It is not so with every other race. Empires have fallen and buried the men that constructed them; but the Jew has lived among the ruins, a living monument of indestructibility.

Persecution has unsheathed the sword and lighted the fagot; papal superstition, moslem barbarism have smote them with unsparing ferocity; penal rescript and deep prejudice have visited on them the most unrighteous chastisement—and, notwithstanding all, they survive.

Like the Thorn-Bush on Mount Horeb, Israel has continued in the flames, but unconsumed.

A Babylonian, a Theben, a Spartan, an Athenian, a Roman are names known in history only; their shadows alone haunt the world and flicker the tablets. A Jew walks every street, dwells in every capital, traverses every exchange, and relieves the monotony of the nations of the earth.

Our race has inherited the heirloom of immortality, incapable of extinction or amalgamation.

Like streamlets from a common head and composed of water of a peculiar nature, they have flowed along every stream without blending with it or receiving its flavor, and traversed the surface

of the globe amidst the lapse of many centuries distinct, alone.

The Jewish people at this day is the most striking seal of truth of the sacred oracles.

There is no possibility of accounting for their perpetual isolations, their depressed but distinct being, on any grounds, save those revealed in the Torah.

What happened on Mount Sinai was read to us this morning. In it do we find the secret of our perpetuity; therein lies the truth of our indestructibility.

And, on this day, when I join the camp of the immortals, the great hall of eternal fame, I feel a special elation, because it happens on the Sabbath, when the story of Revelation is told.

Like all Israel beneath Sinai, I say: "All that the Lord hath spoken I will do and obey." May He help me to keep steadfast therein; and may He grace my parents, and all of you with long life, so that we all shall witness the restoration of His Kingdom in Zion, Amen.

XVIII.

משפטים

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Midrash Agadah, in commenting on the Verse we just read in the portion of the Torah for this Sabbath, saying: "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way," interprets it very beautifully; "The Rabbis said: 'the angel herein spoken of is Michael,' the selfsame angel who appeared in the days of Joshua, and said: 'But I am a captain of the host of the Lord; I am now come,' and the selfsame Michael spoken of by Daniel. But this sending of an angel before Israel, some other Rabbis interpret, is in accord with what the Verse in Psalms says: "A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand." But why was the left side given but a thousand and the right ten thousand? Said Rabbi Isaac: 'Because the left hand does not need over-many angels, because the Name of God is written in the phylactery which is put on the left arm; and if one is perfect in observing the Torah and in good deeds the Holy One, blessed is He! keeps him, even as it is said: 'May God bless thee and keep thee'."

I am to-day becoming a son of the command-

ments. I am charged from this day onward to be perfect in observing the Torah, and in good deeds.

I am not yet a man in any sense of the word. I am conscious of my unripeness, well aware of my shortcomings. I fear the ground I now stand upon. It is holy ground. I must not step upon it too loud, with my shoes on. I must walk softly, and feel my way.

For more than a decade my parents kept watch over me, guarded every footprint of mine, led me in a path which they knew was good for me. It is not within the sphere of mortal beings to continue to do so all of their lives, to have their children depended upon them continuously.

When the people of Israel was in its infancy, when we were still young, God led us, guided every one of our movements. Miracle after miracle was performed for our benefit. We were fed upon Manna when there was no bread; we were told to keep still, for God will fight our battles. But there was no need of miracles, after God brought us into the promised land. We were told to work out our own salvation upon the basis of the nature of things. We were endowed with all the faculties necessary to sustain an earthly career for the period of life God grants us. It would have been very uninteresting, to say the

least, to be depending solely upon miracles, to lead a life of idleness, to be of no use upon earth.

God did not intend us to be that way. The sweetness of life, the very essence of human existence upon earth, is production, work, effort, achievement.

But all of these must be carried out after a prescribed manner, orderly, in a way, and under conditions, fit for the children of God's image.

There had to be law and order, even as our Torah, in the chapters just read to us, ordains. In addition we must provide food for the soul. Its cravings are Godly, heavenly, entirely unearthly. For this very reason God crowned us with the crown of Torah. That is food for our soul.

In order to be reminded that our soul needs food, that we must not permit it to starve any more than we can permit our bodies to be without food, God had mercy upon us by giving us commandments. And, as I am now a son of the commandments of God—Bar Mitzvah—my first duty was to put on the phylacteries.

My left hand, nearest my heart, is betokened with a phylactery, in which the Name of God is written. I have therein a strong protection. Where the left hand stands in need of a thousand the right stands in need of ten thousand.

But if I am perfect in my ways, perfect in observing the Torah, I will be entirely in the keeping of God. He Alone will protect me.

I know that I am as yet not able to stand upon this sacred ground of Torah and commandments unsupported. But if I keep up the commandments God will be my support.

And, as I have no right to expect overmuch, because I know my own shortcomings, I pray to God to send His angel, Michael, before me; to keep me by the way. I pray that Almighty God send his blessings from Zion and shower them upon you, my dear parents, and upon all of you who are assembled in this sacred place of worship to glorify His Name. And, may He send a Redeemer to Zion, Amen.

XIX.

תרומה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the portion of our Torah, we read this Sabbath, it is said: "And thou shalt make the horns of it (of the altar) upon the four corners thereof; the horns thereof shall be of one piece with it." Thereupon the sages of the Midrash Agadah comment saying: "The Holy One, blessed is He! said: 'I have given to Israel upon Mount Sinai four horns, namely: the horn of Torah; the horn of priesthood; the horn of sovereignty; and the horn of Israel as a people, whom I have exalted above all other peoples.' The horn of sovereignty refers to Moses, of whom it is said: 'And there was a king in Jeshurun'; and it is also said: 'Moses knew not that the skin of his face sent forth horns.' The horn of the Torah, even as it is said: 'And a brightness appeareth as the light, horns hath He at His side.' The horn of priesthood, even as it is said: 'But my horn hast thou exalted.' And, the horn of Israel as a people, even as it is said: 'And He lifted up a horn for His people.' Therefore, when God charged the people of Israel to build an altar, He instructed them to make it of one piece with four horns, so that it may give atonement for the

people of Israel whom He crowned with four horns."

It is now necessary to explain that the Hebrew word Keren, mentioned in this connection, is only a figure of speech, and does not refer to horns in its literal meaning. The countenance of Moses was adorned with beams of light. The Torah is referred to as a bright light which gives out rays. The priesthood is a beam of light. So is the people of Israel among the nations spreading rays of light, even in the darkest corners of the earth.

But the altar was ordered to be made symbolic of the four beams of light—Sovereignty, Torah, Priesthood and Israel—; to have four corners, not nailed to it, not of a different material, not made separately; but of the same material, built simultaneous with the altar itself.

The altar itself was the emblem of sacrifice. Life, and all the duties it brings to mankind, can be sustained properly, even as God intended it, when every one is willing to bring some sacrifice to yield something of his own for the benefit of the next one.

The greatest happiness that life's store affords, lies hidden beneath the desire to attain the goal of self-sacrifice. Life is of no use, if it can not be employed as a means to be of service to others.

Every Jew combines Sovereignty, Torah, Priesthood and Israel. To be able to rule one's own self is the greatest form of sovereignty; to educate one's own self is the highest form of Torah; to lead a pure life is the finest expression of priesthood; and to set a good example for others is the best way to carry out the mission of Israel among the nations.

In adorning Israel with commandments, God ordered certain tokens to be put on one's body. When I was still too young to comprehend its meaning, I was told to put on a Zizit, fringes, as one of my garments. The four corners of the Zizit, as I now understand it, symbolize the four rays of light, the four corners on the altar. I should be reminded of self-control, of education, of purity of purpose, and of conduct among others.

Now, at my Bar Mitzvah, I am ordered to put phylacteries on my arm and upon my head. They are teaching me to be reminded of my duties, both in thought and in action, as exemplified by the four corners of the Zizit.

I hail this day with delight. I bow to its significance in reverence. I am mindful of what it means, and sense the hardship it entails; but I also know the happiness that will be mine if I keep steadfast and carry out my determination, and

bring my life to that successful goal aimed at by the moulders of Jewish thought as illustrated in the beautiful Midrash Agadah on the chapters of the Torah we read this Sabbath.

I pray to Almighty to gather Israel from the four corners of the globe, and bring them to Zion, where they will be enabled to set up the standard of the Torah of God, where the Four Horns will shout for resurrection of every dead soul, where Sovereignty, Torah, Priesthood and the Light of Israel will shine forever, Amen.

XX.

תצוה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the portion of the Torah read this Sabbath, the Architect of the Universe gave a beautiful pattern in His commandment concerning the making of the Breastplate of Judgment and the Ephod, saying: "And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of carnelian, topaz, and smaragd shall be the first row; and the second row a carbuncle, a sapphire, and an emerald; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be enclosed in gold in their settings. And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names."

The Talmudic sages, in giving the details how, and in what order the precious stones were set, describe it, saying: "The High-Priest had two precious stones upon his shoulders, one on each side, and the names of the twelve tribes were inscribed upon them, six names in the one and six names in the other. The right stone, named Judah first, but the left stone had the names of the tribes according

to the order of their birth. Upon the Breastplate of Judgment were twelve stones, wherein were set the following names, in the following order: In the first stone of the first row, that is in the carnelian, were set the names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Rueben; in the second stone, topaz, was set the name of Simeon; in the third stone, smaragd, was set the name of Levi. In the first stone of the second row, that is in the carbuncle, was set the name of Judah; in the sapphire was set the name of Issachar, and in the emerald was set the name of Zebulun. In the first stone of the third row, that is, in the jacinth, was set the name of Dan; in the agate was set the name of Naphtali; and in the amethyst was set the name of Gad. In the first stone of the fourth row, that is in the beryl, was set the name of Asher; in the onyx was set the name of Joseph, and in the jasper was set the name of Benjamin. At the bottom were set in these words: 'All these are the tribes of Israel.' Of course, the setting was done in Hebrew characters. The last line was set in so that every letter of the Hebrew Alphabet be inscribed therein. During High services the High-Priest had on the two shoulder stones and the Breastplate of Judgment."

Now, it is a fact in the life of all human beings, that ceremony appeals to the make-up of man's

soul. The Hoshen and Ephod which the High-Priest had on, to the general public that saw it, or knew about it, it appealed as a magnificent part of the ceremonialism of the Jewish religion.

But the matter is far from being so. Judaism, and every one of its laws in detail, does not recognize ceremonialism as such. The laws of Judaism are soul-searching institutions. Of course they, of right, should be practiced in beautiful form. The beauty of its holiness should, and does, appeal to every one. But a mere exposition of art only satisfies the senses, and awakens in the body feelings which are not at all sacred in the eyes of God.

To me, my mother is the most beautiful woman on the face of the earth. Her beaming countenance is due to a sacred feeling within her, now that she can behold me grown up, standing here as a man, facing men and women and proclaiming my joy in sharing responsibilities with them. My mother's beauty now, to me, is a beauty of holiness. Perhaps, a friend of mine, whose mother is a famous actress, considers his mother the most beautiful in the world; but that beauty, even it be so, belongs to the beauty of art, which has nothing at all to do with the judgment of the soul.

The High-Priest carried on his body the spiritual magnificence of the whole story of Israel.

Every tribe shines out from a back-ground of a precious stone. They were hewn out of the ancient rocks, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are all united in a Breastplate of Judgment, illustrating the Justice of God's Torah. The letters of the Hebrew Alphabet illustrate the Jewish culture, and the place it holds in civilization. And, when the Jewish people really lived the life symbolized in this setting, it became the Urim and Tumim of all Israel, which foretold everything, and which answered every suppliant.

This is the way I feel, standing here, and addressing you all, on the happiest day of my childhood. I cross the line now. I become a responsible being. I glory in the knowledge thereof.

May Almighty God bring back to us our ancient glory, Amen.

XXI.

תְּשַׁא

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a very disagreeable chapter that we read this morning in our Torah. The story of the “golden calf.”

Innocent Aaron, how many great men were forced to do the people’s bidding despite their own convictions!

Patriotic Moses, how great does he appear in the light of history, when we read the record that he pleaded with God to have his own name blotted out but preserve the name of Israel!

Gold, the greatest curse, as well as the greatest blessing of mankind. A curse, when it is worshipped; a blessing, when good is accomplished by its economic force.

Materialism, how symbolic of destructibility, of temporariness, of final dissolution! And, yet, how emblematic of all that life upon earth is worth while, how figurative of everything man drains his life’s blood for!

The Midrashic sages aver that, when Moses prayed for the children of Israel, after God in-

formed him of what they did, he said: "Be it far from Thee to blot out a people like unto this from the world."

Man is a composite being. He has senses of touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste. All of these are earthly senses. Perhaps, there is a little too much of clay, and too little of spirit, in the make up of every human being. But we are here, and we can not change our elements, or our senses.

But there is a sixth sense. It consists of a longing, a feeling which is not earthly. It is not a physical craving. Nor is it a material ambition. Every human being experiences that feeling. Of course, not when one is overindulging in things earthly, or self-satisfied with material happiness.

Read a soul-inspiring poem, behold a celestial phenomenon, study the prophets, and you will feel, almost in a real sense, a kind of sensation which is entirely unearthly. But be careful not to mix this feeling with a physical longing for one whom you love, for a thing you would most like, for a goal which would make your position comfortable. All of these do not belong to that sixth sense, which is the soul's own self-expression.

In a very dark night, when your eyes do not function for your convenience, if you become accustomed to the darkness, or if you inhabit a re-

mote place which is never lit up by night, you will discover a new power in your eyes. You will be able to see. Of course not with a clear vision. But you will be able to recognize the difference between a horse and a dog, although you might not be able to tell the difference between a wolf and a dog. That, of course, will convince you that you are not completely blind in the dark.

Even so is the light our soul is able to give us while it lives in this dark body of ours.

The people of Israel saw in Egypt, on the Red Sea, and beneath Mount Sinai such visions with their natural eyes that they come to a false conclusion. They believed that everything is natural and material, that all forces of nature and all forces beyond and above it are material. They could see in the dark as well as they did by day-light. They thought that darkness does not at all exist.

Of a sudden they see that Moses does not return, when he was expected: that they could no longer see what they thought they would always behold with their naked eyes; that they were deprived of some power which they considered was theirs to be and hold forever. They looked for a substitute. And, when they saw the "Golden Calf" endowed with life, for it was prancing around and skipping about, their joy knew no limit. They considered

their achievement the final goal of man to reach the summit of all mysteries, and unravel them. They actually believed that they landed on the path which will give them knowledge of life and death, heaven and earth, sea and planet, creation and dissolution.

How often do men think that way! The power of gold blinds them!

But Moses, too, was human. He understood the terrible error. He knew that the people of Israel were looking for the spiritual, and the mistake they made in arriving at the conclusion that there was no spiritual by seeing a molten calf dance!

He knew that mortal beings, with finite powers, could be misled by being overambitious, could be blinded by thinking that there is nothing further to behold, could be turned to a path which directs only to an abyss of certain spiritual destruction.

He, therefore, pleaded with God for forgiveness, praying to be himself destroyed, so as not to be pointed out as the one to follow, and, thereby, destroy every human being who would err.

This sums up the story of the "Golden Calf." But the lesson it conveys is outstanding till this day.

To me it is the greatest lesson in my short career

upon earth. Just as I am about to commence feeling all my earthly senses and develop them, I become Bar-Mitzvah—a son of commandment. It teaches me to develop that sixth sense which belongs to my soul, and which should be the path-finder for all my physical senses. The self-same hand of mine, which is intended to be tired with labor, my soul dictates that it be tired with honest labor, honest pursuits, honorable vocation. My material happiness should not be based upon things which would destroy my soul. I have a phylactery on my arm to remind me of it. My thoughts which are to regulate my conduct, shape my character, direct my movements should function under the guidance of my soul. I have a phylactery upon my head to remind me of it.

And, the Torah as a whole, the commandments of which I am henceforth to observe, is a force which will keep my whole being in the path of God, and be a beacon of light to me even in this dark age of materialism.

I pray to God to give me His aid, that I be able to hold on to these resolutions, and be steadfast therein, Amen.

XXII.

וַיְקַהֵל

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen : The Talmudic scholars, in commenting upon this Sidrah, say. "This Sidrah had to be instructed in the presence of a large congregation, to assemble them and charge them concerning the observance of the Sabbath. It is related that a prince asked of Rabbi Akiba : 'Why is this day different than all other days of the week?' and he replied : 'Why is one man different than another man?' The prince then asked him : 'What did I ask of you, and what did you ask of me?' And Rabbi Akiba replied : 'You asked me why is the Sabbath different than any other day?' And I asked you : 'Why are you different than any other man?' And the king said : 'I am different because the king wanted to do me honor.' And Rabbi Akiba replied : 'Even the Sabbath is honored because the King wanted it to be so.' And the prince further asked : 'Can you bring evidence that the Sabbath is different?' And Rabbi Akiba replied : "The river Sanbation is evidence enough; on all other days it continues to cast stones, but it rests on the Sabbath'."

There is a Jewish legend that, when the Ten

Tribes of Israel were driven out of Eretz Yisrael and led in captivity, they migrated from the countries of their exile to a territory beyond the river Sanbation. No traveller can reach them, or have communication with them, because that river is not only too stormy to traverse it, but it continuously casts stones for a stretch of territory around it, and kills every one who approaches it. Only on Sabbaths does it stop its menacing activity. No stones, no storm, but calm and peacefulness.

The Talmudic sages say: "Had all of the tribes of Israel kept even as few Sabbath as two, but kept it according to the law of the Torah, Israel would be redeemed from all lands of exile at once."

A people's legends are the lines on a painting depicting its life. In folklore we find the soul of every race, creed, nation, and culture. This legend about Sanbation, depicts the reverence the Jewish people ever retained for the Sabbath. The soul's food is denied during the time of the body's physical labor. When the body is tired, fatigued and in need of rest, man's mind will not function in a spiritual direction. The body is the dwelling-place of the soul. The soul craves orderliness, beauty, sacredness, repose and inspiration. All that can be, only in a body which lives in clean environment, in a mind which is cultured, in a physique which is sound.

We are charged to give rest even to our animals. We must let the land rest every seventh year; a real Sabbath for nature. We must not desire to live a lifetime in a span of but few weeks. God created the world in six days, and it took him but ten words to order all things to be, and they were. And, God rested on the seventh day.

Man's life is regulated by stopping-points, and he reaches old age by stepping-stones. He is not born full-grown; he is not born with teeth, speech, ability to walk, or understand. He is given ample time to develop. Between periods there are stops. The suckling, the school boy, the young fellow, the man of strength, the man of wisdom, the father, the grand-father—each epoch in man's life is terminated in a Sabbath, in a period of rest and re-creation, reflection and resolution.

The little boy can not always play ball or marbles. There comes a time when he dislikes it completely. The boy has a Sabbath between ball or marble-playing and high-school. The high-school boy can not always wear the high-school colors. He either enters a field of labor, or a college. The college man can not always be interested in examinations, fraternities and parties. He must take his place in society. Between periods there are Sabbaths.

Pagans and savages had no conception of such orderliness. The people of Israel recognized both the need and the beauty of the Sabbath. But the Sabbath appears most beautiful when a whole people, when everybody, observes it. The Ten Tribes were lost among the nations which enslaved them. They assimilated with them. They are separated from the rest of their brethren till this day by a river which is called Sanbation, a river which casts stones upon everybody which desires to bring the beauty of God's laws, of the Sabbath to the rest of the world; a river which keeps peoples separated forever, which does not permit real civilization to penetrate everywhere. Indeed, when all Israel would keep two Sabbaths, as the Torah ordains, the Redeemer would come to Zion.

It is for this reason that Moses gathered a large congregation to instruct them concerning the Sabbath.

To me, this Sabbath is of special meaning. I have my own Sabbath in addition to the sacredness of the day. I have my stop between periods. I am leaving the period of childhood and am facing the period of self-reliance. And, I have my Bar-Mitzvah celebration.

It is with this thought in my heart that I pray to God to keep my path free from stumbling-

blocks; to grant that the Sabbaths of my life be honored by Him, even as His own Sabbaths which He gave to my people were honored by Him; to grace my parents with long life, so that their Sabbaths be distinguished by the soulful rest necessary in the service of Him in Whom we trust to have a redeemer come to Zion, Amen.

XXIII.

פרק ז'

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Sidrah of this week pictures to us the Tabernacle built in the Wilderness by Bezalel, the great architect, who worked under the direction of the Architect of the universe. The Midrashic sages have this to say concerning the chief parts of the Tabernacle: "We have created a Tabernacle for Thy sake, in return for what Thou hast created in the six days. On the first day, Thou hast created the heaven and the earth; in return thereof we have made for Thy sake an Ark of the Covenant wherein lie two tablets of stone testifying to the creation of the heaven and the earth. On the second day, Thou hast created the division between the waters; in return thereof we have made the veil to divide between the holy place and the most holy. On the third day, Thou hast created the seas; in return thereof we have made the laver and the sea of Solomon; and in return for the grass and the fruit-trees which Thou hast made on the third day we have made the Table, and upon it the Show-bread. On the fourth day, Thou hast created the sun and the moon and the stars; in return thereof we have

made the Menorah, seven branches to symbolise the seven planets, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune. On the fifth day, Thou hast created fowl; in return thereof we have made Cherubs who are winged even as are birds. On the sixth day, Thou hast created the man Adam, and placed him in the Garden of Eden; in return thereof we have placed Aaron the High-Priest at Thy service."

The Tabernacle built in the wilderness, according to some ancient scholars, was planned and constructed to symbolize man. Man is a miniature of the universe. In him are to be found every element traced in the things that grow and live. In his nature are engendered the traits and characteristics of the whole animal kingdom. His soul, being of unearthly origin, is symbolic of the Heavenly Kingdom. The body and the soul have their respective functions, but the nature of man is to be attracted more strongly to things which are earthly.

The savage peoples, who remain undeveloped, are even unconscious of the presence of the soul in them. Infidels and atheists deny the existence of a soul in them. The savage, by proper teaching, by being brought in a wholesome environment, may cultivate his being to be a useful member of

society. The infidel and the atheist believe that they are useful citizens as they are, and refuse to recognize in life anything higher than material things. They are grappling in the dark, looking for the seat of intelligence, claiming that the greatest of achievement is the work of the natural state in man, without the least aid of an unearthly Intelligence.

The people of Israel wandered in the wilderness, and were called upon to create a generation which was to build the Jewish nation in Palestine. They were shown how of material things, wood and metal, tapestry and cloth, which, when constructed by an intelligence they neither can comprehend nor see, can become a soul-inspiring instrument.

The people of Israel saw in the Tabernacle a unit constructed of a variety of fractions. In it they also saw a mirrored picture of their own lives. Every part of the Tabernacle had a function; each part being an aid to make the other serve its purpose, and the whole of it functioned as a place to bring man nearer his God.

The body, too, can be made to function in a like manner.

It is for this reason that God adorned us with commandments to chain the forces of nature in

the body, and make it do the bidding of the soul. The real joy of life belongs to him who is governed by his soul. The other extreme is the animal and the savage.

The thinking infidel and atheist do not enjoy life, unless they turn savage. Being educated, it is not likely that even the guise of savagery satisfies their inner cravings. The light in their mind is never clear, never chasing away the darkness and, therefore, no one can claim for them any purpose of their being upon earth.

It is, therefore, a source of joy to me that I am now being initiated into the folds of the God-serving element upon earth. My soul will not be disturbed, and my body will not suffer. I am to be tranquil upon earth, and have a hope to inherit heaven. My light will not be dimmed; my path will not cross the regions of danger and terror by night, nor the deserts of famine and scorching suns by day.

I am Bar-Mitzvah, a son of the commandments of God. I dedicate here and now my life to labors of duty and love. I feel that by caring for my soul, my body shall not suffer, and by restraining my body to lawful channels, my soul shall not suffer.

My prayer to God this day is: Be it Thy will, O Lord of my fathers, that no evil eye overtake me; and that no enemy encroach upon my field of labor. I thank Thee for having given me a soul by which I am enabled to perceive Thy greatness. And, I pray Thee, continue to show Thy loving kindness to my parents, my relatives, my friends and this congregation. Send, O Heavenly Father, a Redeemer to Zion, Amen.

XXIV.

וַיְקִרְאָה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the chapters of the Torah which we read this week, it is said: "And if a soul will sin." Thereupon the sages of the Talmud comment: "It is true; the soul of man sins. Even so the Rabbis declare. In the future state God will call each soul, and ask it: 'Why didst thou transgress all of the commandments of the Torah?' But the soul will reply: 'The body violated all of Thy commandments. Behold, since I left the body, did I commit any sin?' God will then call each body, and ask it: 'Why didst thou sin, and transgress all of My commandments?' But the body will reply: 'I did not sin; it was the soul. Behold since it left me did I commit any sin?'

"But God is All-Knowing, so He will judge them simultaneously."

The Talmud illustrates this by a beautiful parable:

"Once upon a time a king had a vineyard, and he was looking for a keeper to watch the grapes, which had then ripened. The king bethought

himself, saying: 'Shall I appoint a man who can see, he will eat up the best grapes himself; on the other hand, if I appoint a blind man, he will be unable to watch it altogether. So he decided to appoint two watchmen, one a blind man, and the other a lame man. Said the blind man to the lame man: 'My, but I do smell very fine grapes.' And the lame man replied: 'Indeed, the grapes, as I can see, are luscious; but what can I do, I can not walk over to get any of them.' Said the blind man: 'If that is what we lack, come get on my shoulders; I can walk, and you can see; I will carry you to the grapes; you will pick them, and both you and I will eat to our heart's content.' And so they did. When the king came on a tour of inspection, he saw that the best and most ripe grapes were gone. Said he to the blind man: 'Who picked the best grapes?' Said the blind man: 'Why ask me, can I see?' And the king asked the lame man: 'Who picked the best grapes?' Said the lame man: 'Can I walk over to pick them?' But the king found a way to judge them; he tried them both simultaneously."

This is good evidence that the body and the soul continue a life-long war upon earth, as long as they are together. The body alone can not sin; it is, without the life that the soul imparts to it, a mere chemical mixture, which can be purchased in any

drug store for less than a dollar; a mere piece of clay, incapable of either moving about or planning out aught. The soul is a heavenly being, coming down upon earth from a region where sin is unknown, where all the gold of the earth means nothing, where only hymns of praise and thanksgiving are sung by a chorus of Angels to the Creator of the universe. But when body and soul form a union, the dead matter becomes active; desires and cravings multiply; and a battle between heaven and earth begins.

And the Talmudists, being anxious to find a remedy for this evil, being anxious to stop this warfare between body and soul, did find a remedy. That remedy is contained in the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying: "And, when all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, then great shall be the peace of thy children."

The teachings of God are to be found in our Torah and in its commandments. In it there is food for the body, and food for the soul; and when both are satisfied there is peace and harmony between them.

In standing here before you, on this day of my Bar-Mitzvah, I feel that the Tephilin are an emblem of both, the soul and the body, the phylactery on the arm, on the instrument of the man which

represents labor, toil, earthliness, is symbolic of the body; and the phylactery upon the head, on the instrument of thought, of intelligence, of intellect, is symbolic of the soul. By putting them on, I am to be reminded of the blindness to sin of the soul before it enters the body, and of the lameness of the body in its earthly state. I am, moreover, to be reminded of the constant war between body and soul. But the remedy to establish peace between them was given to me in adding to me a new name—Bar-Mitzvah—a son of the commandment. By studying the Torah, the teachings of God, and by observing the commandments, I will be able to have peace between my soul and my body.

May Almighty God look down with favor upon my resolutions of this day; and may He grant me that peace which is so essential to my happiness, to my earthly career. May He bless you all, Amen.

XXV.

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My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this week we read: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: 'Command Aaron and his sons, saying': This is the law of the burnt-offering; it is that which goeth up on its fire-wood upon the altar all night unto the morning." The Talmudic sages, in interpreting the higher meaning of this charge, say: "This is in harmony with the expression of king David in Psalms, saying: 'For who in the skies can be compared unto the Lord, who among the sons of might can be likened unto the Lord.' The Holy One, blessed is He! said: 'If I really desired a sacrifice, could I not instruct My Angel Michael, who is ever before Me, to bring Me one? Yet I asked none who is in the skies to offer sacrifices to Me; but I did ask Israel to do it, not because I am in need thereof, but to have them act righteously and gain by it, even as the prophet Isaiah expressed it, saying: 'The Lord was pleased for his righteousness' sake, to make the teaching great and glorious'."

Sacrifices of any kind are not a means of satisfying the demands of God; but an end attained by

any one who educated himself to be of service. The Angels in heaven do not have to strive in their effort to please their Creator. The moment the Angel is attached to the heavenly hosts his mission is attained.

But not so the human being. It is the nature of all man to prize the instinct of self-love. We are not prone to forget ourselves in our effort to remain among the living on earth.

Whether or not it would have been better had Almighty not endowed us with the natural law of self-preservation is problematical. But, since it is our nature, it is evident that God made us so for a divine purpose. Human nature is divine, if utilized in a sense of proportion; but if it is left unchecked and without a scale, it becomes beastly.

The movement of the hand might be employed to give alms; and it also can be used to commit murder. Human speech can move hearts to everything that is noble in life; but it also can deprave minds, if it is employed diabolically. The human heart is capable to love; but it can also lodge hatred. The human eye might behold things of which the mind is enriched, such as reading our Torah; but it can also become an agent for evil thoughts. A man's feet may carry him on an errand of mercy; but they may also take him either to destroy others or to his own destruction.

The entire make-up of man was likened by medieval scholars to a house. The head, the eyes, the feet, the heart and the stomach, have been likened to the roof, the windows, the foundation, the living-room, and the kitchen.

The roof of a house must be sound, or the rain will penetrate and make the entire house unfit to live in. The head of man must be sound, or every kind of evil will make his life impossible. The windows furnish light to the inhabitants of a house; they must not be of dark material, or broken altogether. The eyes of man must function in a manner to enlighten him; if not he will be considered blind, which is only a step from death itself. The foundation of a house is the only part which supports the entire structure; any error in laying the foundation might cause the whole house to crumble. The feet of a person, his ways, his conduct, form the very existence of a man; if that is not in order his entire being is not to be considered human. The living-room of a house must be so arranged as to provide the necessary dimensions, or it is not a human habitation. The heart of every man must be broad enough, big enough to embrace all human life, or it is the heart of an animal. The kitchen of a house must be provided with the necessary cooking utensils, or it is of no value whatever. The stomach of a

person must be guarded against the impurities which may convey to his blood elements of food not at all fit for him.

God, in his mercy, provided for man every means of escape from evil. In His Torah, by the commandments of the Torah, He manifested His mercy to all living. Israel, because it knew the value of the Torah long before any other people, has demonstrated throughout history how right living will secure perpetuity for the body and immortality for the soul.

It is because of the Torah and its commandments, which I am now in duty bound to observe, that I am on this day the happiest thirteen-year-old boy. I know that my career is mapped out for me on a chart of Godliness; that the lines forming the map are indented with rainbow colors, painted by the Hand of God.

I am Bar-Mitzvah—a son of the commandment. Like all Israelites I will endeavor to round out my earthly existence in honor to my people, in delight to my parents, and in the glory which Almighty wants His children upon earth to achieve.

May Almighty receive my prayer this day in a favorable light; may He accept my thanksgiving in a merciful light; may He shower His blessings upon you, my dear parents, and upon all Israel and Zion, Amen.

XXVI.

שְׁמִינִי

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen : The Midrash, in commenting upon the opening Verse of the Sidrah read this week, has this to say : "And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel ; and he said unto Aaron : 'Take thee a bull-calf for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering, without blemish, and offer them before the Lord.' This commandment is in harmony with the saying of Solomon in Ecclesiastes : 'Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know no evil thing'."

And, the Midrash further comments upon the opening Verse of this Sidrah, saying : "This is in harmony with what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes : 'Divide the portion into seven, yea, even into eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon earth.' Rabbi Simon said : 'The seven and the eight herein referred to, point at the two princes, Elishama, a descendant of Ephraim, who acted as prince on the seventh day of the Dedication of the Tabernacle, and to Gamaliel, descendant of Manasseh, who acted in a like capacity on the eighth day'."

The connection between the quoted passages, and the opening Verse and the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, on its face, appears to be limited to the number eight spoken of in this Sidrah. But a closer analysis reveals much more, and is entirely fitting in with my holiday.

Everything a man does must be done right. There must not be a blemish in his work. If he brings an offering to God, that offering must have no blemish, even as Aaron was charged.

When the Tabernacle was Dedicated, princes were selected to officiate on as many days. Each prince represented a tribe in Israel. The Dedication was to be a memorial for all generations.

The two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, in putting strange fire in a censer, and offering it to God, were themselves consumed in that flame.

No one can do evil and escape the consequences thereof. There is ever "a watchful eye, an attentive ear, and a busy scribe" who marks down everything one does.

Only, in some instances, the reward, or the punishment, as the case might be, does not come simultaneous with the act, as it was in the instance of Nadab and Abihu.

To do things of one's own accord, without having been charged to do them by Divine command,

or to do contrary to a Divine command, never ends well. We must do things, or refrain from doing them, not alone because our reason dictates its propriety, or its repulsiveness, but because God charged us to do, or not to do, them.

To offer sacrifices to God with strange fire, is an act God does not favor. To bring any kind of a sacrifice, to bring aught which is blemished, which is not what the commandment concerning it teaches, is an act God does not favor.

To bring in strange fire in the House of God is an act God despises. One's soul is the property of God. Only, God gave to it, during its sojourn in man's body, the freedom to act, the choice to follow its own inclinations. But there is an accounting sure to come.

It is easy to offer blemished sacrifices, upon a strange fire, built in a strange censer.

It is easy for one to neglect his duty as a Jew, join strange camps, forsake his own people, and come once or twice in a year and bring a sacrifice to God. That is offering a blemished sacrifice, upon a strange fire, built in a strange censer.

But, "Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know no evil," said Solomon. For the opening Verse of this Sidrah charges to bring an offering without a blemish.

Moreover, the proper way to offer sacrifices is to follow tradition, to follow the footsteps of our fathers. Even as the two princes, Elishama and Gamaliel did, at the Dedicatory service; they followed the footsteps of Ephraim and Manasseh, their fathers, who, therefore, were pronounced princes.

Solomon, therefore, wisely said: "Divide the portion into seven, yea, even into eight." For on the seventh and on the eighth day of the Dedication, two princes presided who were born of parents that were not natives of Canaan, not under the roof of Jacob; for Ephraim and Manasseh were born in Egypt, and in the house of their father, Joseph, who was the ruler of Egypt. Nevertheless, they offered sacrifices as God had commanded.

In view of this, my delight in coming here to dedicate my life to the service of God, as He commanded, to embrace the opportunity of keeping His commandments, to feel the pride of becoming a son of the commandments, knows no bounds, nor no limits. My soul is inspired with a Godly flame, not with strange fire. I feel like unto one of the princes who served on the eighth day, as my Bar-Mitzvah falls on the Sabbath Shemini—the Eighth.

May Almighty keep me out of strange flames,
of blemished sacrifices, of ungodly censers; may
He bless you all, and restore to Zion its ancient
glory, Amen.

XXVII.

תזריע

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I now stand in awe and reverence before you, for I know that I am also in the presence of God.

God's Providence brought me here. I was born most helpless. God was good to me. He endowed my mother with the necessary patience to watch over and take care of me, by day and by night. He blessed me with a father who toiled for my sake, not alone to provide food, raiment and shelter for my body, but an education for my soul.

God's Providence brought me here. I was born in the folds of His chosen people, the people of Israel. He gave to the people of Israel a Torah, commandments, and an Holy Land. Other peoples envied my people God's munificent gifts. By every means of love and hate, war and peace, tyranny and liberty, wealth and poverty, famine and plenty, exile and permanency the nations tried to deprive my people of these precious gifts.

My people lost its independence as a nation, its Holy Land, the greater portion of the original twelve tribes; but it preserved the Torah and its

commandments. In fact, it enriched both, during the centuries of triumphs and defeats.

The Sidrah we read this week contains laws which are a tribute to Jewish motherhood, and a contribution to the science of hygiene. It is an everlasting seal of truth. It affirms and confirms our belief that our Torah is divine, God-given.

It is evident that God intended for the people which will receive His Torah, an everlasting existence upon earth.

The Midrash, in pointing out the merciful ways of God, comments on the laws of hygiene, saying: "Lo, how patient God is in bringing about punishment for violating any of the laws which affect bodily cleanliness. He first warns, then punishes one's property, which is another warning, and only then one's body is punished. First one's house is infected, then one's clothes, and only then his flesh."

There are two ways of building a nation. One is the wrong way. And, that is: to enjoy a few years of everything life affords, overindulge in everything, sicken with the spell of unnatural living, and die. The other is the right way. And, that is: Live in moderation; partake of life in regular portions; look far into the future, and continue under self-restraint, and live forever.

There is no life in the body without the soul. But the soul fills the entire body. Every movement is an offshoot of the soul's power.

The body is subject to known and unknown diseases. So is the soul. The remedies for the body have not yet all been discovered, but the remedies for the soul are few, and all are well known.

The desires of the body are many and varied. The desires of the soul are few and identical.

Our Torah teaches us prevention. It gives remedies too. The preventives against diseases are numerous, and differ widely in their application. But the preventives against the diseases of the soul are but few, and have but a single application.

Belief in God is the foundation of foundations for all preventive and remedial diseases of the soul.

And, this single belief, if properly applied to life and living, will simplify all remedies and all preventives necessary to sustain the life and health of the body.

The mind can think out preventives; the hand can apply remedies. The mind is the source of cure for the soul, the hand is the instrument of cure for the body.

I am, therefore, doubly blessed in having my Bar-Mitzvah celebrated on this Sabbath. The Tephilin which I am now obliged to put on, are both preventive and remedial for my soul and for my body. I put one phylactery on my arm; a preventive and a remedy for my body. I put on the other upon my head; a preventive and a remedy for my soul. I embrace these two remedies and preventives, and by good judgment, under the aid of God, I hope to be able to round out my life in accordance with the resolutions I now make.

I pray to Almighty God to keep me steadfast in all my undertakings, to give His blessings and His sanction to the good work I intend to do during my lifetime as a member in the House of Israel. May He bless my parents, this congregation, and the people of Israel with His blessings of Zion, Amen.

XXVIII.

מצורע

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Sidrah we read this Sabbath is singled out under the title of Mezora, Leper. Not in vain was the sufferer of this terrible scourge picked out as a subject of an entire treatise concerning hygiene in our Torah.

There is a physical leper, and there is a moral leper. The most dangerous of the two, no doubt, is considered by the average person to be the physical leper. But there are other dangerous and contagious diseases mentioned in the Levitical laws of our Torah; why, then, was the leper singled out by name, and his disease made famous by naming one of the Sidroth of the Torah after him?

It is to teach us that the Torah means both, the physical and the moral leper; but the name designates, according to Rabbinical authority, the moral leper, who is the most dangerous individual society harbors in its midst.

Our Talmudists aver that leprosy comes as a punishment for having an evil tongue. The tale-

bearer, the sycophant, the pen-poison artist, the liar, the false witness, the false accuser, the bearer of infamous whispers against the innocent, are the moral lepers society is endangered by. A leprous nation, too, is a possibility. Organized false propaganda against a sister nation, groundless accusations against a race, or sect, or creed, or family come within the meaning of national leprosy.

The Midrash relates: "Once upon a time there was a peddler who wandered throughout the towns in the vicinity of Cyprus, and in every town wherein he stopped he called out, saying: 'Who wants to buy life-giving medicine, who wants to buy life-giving medicine?' And, all of the people living in that section of the world, crowded around him, eager to buy the life-giving medicine. Rabbi Yanni, too, asked the peddler to come up to his study, and bring him a specimen of the life-giving medicine. But the peddler said to him: 'Neither you, nor people like you, need such medicine.' But Rabbi Yanni pressed him sorely to come up; so he did come up. When Rabbi Yanni wanted to see the medicine, the peddler produced a copy of the Psalms, which he opened and read, saying: 'Who is the man that desireth life, and loveth days, that he may see good therein? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.' Then, Rabbi Yanni added a gem of his own, by pointing

that Solomon, too, said : 'Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.'

Both David and his son Solomon knew the leprous tongue, knew the dangers society is cast into by the moral leper, by evil speech. It is a form of disease which makes sick, both the soul and the body.

To me, on this day of my Bar-Mitzvah, the lesson which this Sabbath's Sidrah teaches, is a memorable one. It gives me a path to follow; it teaches me what company to avoid; it admonishes me to live clean.

You, my dear parents, took every precaution against letting me spend my childhood in a bad environment, among bad company. The words I learned from you, and from my teachers, were all words which conveyed to my mind sacredness and holy inspiration.

I am now embracing the commandments; words spoken by Almighty Himself, are to be my guide during my lifetime.

My life henceforth will be shaped to suit my descent, to honor you, and crown with success your efforts.

May Almighty God keep me away from all evil; and may He help me to further my resolutions of

this day by added knowledge and wisdom, knowledge in the worldly arts and sciences, and wisdom in His Torah and commandments. May He bless you all, and bring a Redeemer to Zion, Amen.

XXIX.

אחרי מות

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I am this day joining the sacred army of the Lord of Hosts. I am being fitted out to go abroad in the world and defend the most righteous cause in history, the cause of my people, the people of Israel.

Whatever God has in store for me, I now resolve to be satisfied with. Whatever fate will bring to me, as my share of the worldly goods, I now confess that it all will be by the decree of God.

Everything that God decrees, according to our sages, He fulfills, save when He issues a decree of punishment. That may be altered by repentance, by the good behavior of the one, or ones, against whom such decree was issued.

Before this day, all my sins, you, my dear father, suffered. Hence, I now stand, in this sacred place, before this sacred assembly, a full-fledged Israelite without a sin. I also know that you, my dear father, by your noble example, and sacred life, have no reason to fear for my sins; for, being now a man, I repent most seriously and piously, and pray to God that He forgive you the sins which

you had to suffer and bear on my account. Those sins are mine; I now pray to God, to charge them up against me. I will repent. I will lead a righteous life. And God, in his mercy, whatever punishment He might have decreed as a result of my sins, will now annul.

In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying: 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: I am the Lord your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their statutes.'"

The Midras Agadah, in interpreting these Verses, comments on them, saying: "Three things the people of Israel must do; (1) keep God's laws; (2) keep His statutes; (3) and know that He is God."

By implication, it means, that whatever laws there be, which are not Godly, and whatever statutes there be enacted which are not Godly, and whatever belief else we might be forced to embrace, we must not give our consent to.

The laws of God are based upon true justice, which only God can fathom. The statutes of God

are based upon the commandments of God, which only the people of Israel accepted at the time of Revelation upon Sinai. The knowledge that there is but One God belongs to Abraham, who was the first to believe so, and from whom we have inherited it, and given it to all peoples as the firmest prop upon which the structure of religion rests.

It is now my good fortune to join forces with the responsible members of the House of Israel. I sense the responsibility, and am proud of the fact.

And, as I now enter the service of God, I will offer my thanks and gratitude to my parents, my teachers and my friends, and will invoke the blessings of Him whom I am now ready to worship; that He may shower them upon their heads, and crown their efforts with the glory which is in His Power to bestow, Amen.

XXX.

קדושים

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying: Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them: Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy. Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and ye shall keep My Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God."

God is holy, and He charges us to be holy. He gave to us the same title as His own.

The Torah here charges: Every man shall fear his mother, and his father. The ancient sages of Israel, in commenting on the precedence given here to the mother, said: "It is known to the Holy One, blessed is He! that the son fears the father more than the mother"; the Verse, therefore, mentioned the mother first, to emphasize that a mother should not be considered slightly by a son.

There is a kind of fear which is derived from reverence, and there is a kind of fear which is derived from contempt. One fears his enemy. He has no use for his enemy. But his enemy is liable

to injure him. He fears to be injured, to suffer pain, to sustain a loss. One fears his most honored friend, his teacher, his parent; none of these will do him harm, but he fears to harm them, to misbehave in their presence, to have them think ill of him.

We are commanded to fear God. That fear is derived from reverence. When we think how our being is of such small account in comparison with all that which God created, we are seized by a wave of awe. When we realize that our lives are in the keeping of God, we fear to offend Him. When we think of all the goodness He bestows upon us, how merciful His dealings are with us, how He provides for all that live upon earth, we are overtaken by an awe which leaves us but little else to think about.

We are commanded to honor our fathers and our mothers, and we are also commanded to fear our mothers and our fathers. The kind of fear one experiences when in the presence of one's father is not a fear of a physical nature. A father will not harm his son, even though the son might be deserving of a severe punishment. A father may correct his son, even by not sparing the rod; but he does it for the son's good; to teach him to know better. But for the world and all that it possesses,

I can not imagine of being afraid of my mother. I know I love her. I love her with such love that I can not imagine her to inspire fear in me. I know that in returning home from a day of mischief, as I often did, only kisses awaited me, in addition to plenty of good things to eat. Fear my mother! The very idea seems repulsive to me. My whole being adores her with such love that I can express it only when returning her embrace, or only when I miss her.

And, yet, our Torah teaches me to fear my mother, and that fear is placed in the Torah ahead of the fear I certainly retain for my father.

But our Torah is true. And, as a Bar-Mitzvah, I am in duty bound to observe this commandment.

And I will observe it; and for my mother's sake, perhaps, with more zeal than any other commandment in our Torah.

I will always fear to offend my mother. By not fearing to offend her, I will injure her. And the fear that I feel, lest my mother be hurt, is the strongest fear I am capable of feeling.

I will always fear to do wrong, lest by doing it my mother's heart will break. The fear I feel lest my mother's heart break, is so strong that its influence is of sufficient strength to keep me out of mischief.

I will always keep away from bad company, lest my mother be ashamed. The fear I feel, lest my mother suffer shame, is so strong in me that its effect will prevent me from falling in with any but the friends my mother may approve of.

In honoring my mother, in revering her, in fearing her, I have but one distinct feeling for her—love!

I do understand why our Torah gave precedence to mother when the subject is fear.

To my father I owe the reverence, which is second only to the reverence I owe to God. God gave me my soul; and my father developed it. The love I owe my father is second only to the love I owe to God. God provides for all living; and my father provided for me, from that which God gave, and thereby I was enabled to grow up. The fear I owe to my father is second only to the fear I owe God. God is my father in Heaven; my father is my father upon earth.

And loving, fearing and honoring as I do the Almighty God of us all, I approach His Throne of mercy in supplication now, when I have reached a state of life which makes me an independent being. May He shield me against all evil. May He bless my father and my mother. May He bless you all, Amen.

XXXI.

אמור

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In commenting upon the opening Verse of the Sidrah, we read this Sabbath, the Midrashic sages relate: "When Moses pleaded with God on the plains of Moab, that He reconsider the pronounced sentence upon him, not to permit him to enter the Promised Land, and God said to him: 'Let it suffice thee; speak no more to Me of this matter,' Moses begged to be permitted to see the whole landscape of Eretz Yisrael. This, God granted. Moses saw the whole land, even as it is said: 'From the plains of Moab unto Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, even Gilead as far as Dan; and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Menasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the hinder sea; and the South, and the Plain, even the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, as far as Zoar.' He also showed Moses all of the future generations, and the rulers of each and every generation. He, moreover, showed him Saul, the first king of Israel. But when Moses saw the tragic end of the first king of his people,

that he fell by the sword, he and his children, he said: 'Ruler of the universe! I am amazed at this sight. I can not help but wonder why the first earthly king who will rule over Thy people shall have such terrible end.' And God replied: 'Stop being amazed; Speak unto the priests, the son of Aaron'."

Only a prophet, such as Moses, could look so far into the future of his people. But what Moses saw on the plains of Moab as a vision of prophecy is now to us a past national experience.

We learn from history. We are able to build upon solid rock, if we pay attention to historical facts. The greatest achievement of mankind is hidden in the treasure-rooms of history. When a people forgets its history, or loses respect for it, or ceases to study it, or count it in as a factor in its life, it is indicative that that people is about to be dissolved, and quit functioning among the living peoples of the earth.

To us it is of concern why God told Moses: "Stop being amazed; Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron." What connection can there be established between the tragic death of Saul and the charge to Moses to teach the priests the sons of Aaron?

The sages of the Midrash assert that Saul's outstanding sin was in slaughtering the priests who were at God's service in the Tabernacle. And, when he was in great distress he went to consult the witch of En-Dor.

The priests, if they are learned, are the standard-bearers of God's truth. When Moses saw in his vision from the plain of Moab the terrible fate of Saul, he could not believe his eyes. But God told him the real reason: "Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron."

The Jewish people can not exist solely on secular government. The sacred history of the Jewish people is testimony for that. It is true that priests can not become kings; but it is also true that kings can not become priests. The crown of sovereignty, and the crown of priesthood are two different institutions in the system of Israel's life. Saul, in desperation, wanted to amalgamate the two, and have the entire government of the people, both secular and sacred, in his own hand. That brought about his undoing. And herein we see the connection between the vision of Moses and God's charge regarding the priests.

We now have no priesthood; but the standard-bearers of God's truth to-day are our Rabbis, our scholars, our teachers. The priests were charged

to transmit their charge to their young children. Even so are we now in duty bound to teach the young.

Standing here as I do before you, as a newly initiated member in your midst, I feel that it is my duty to plead the cause of the American Jewish small boy and Jewish small girl. Do they get a square deal? Is there somebody not making Saul's blunder in slaughtering out potential priests, future standard-bearers of God's truth, by denying to them the opportunity of a real Jewish education?

I pray to Almighty God, to give us all the courage and strength of character, to feel the pride we ought to feel in proclaiming to the whole world that we are to continue as Jews, headed for a future filled with glory; to grant us that national spirit which never forgets its past and ever plans for its future.

And, as a new-initiated, independent Israelite, I bless you all. May God glorify you with sacredness of duty and holiness of service. May He bring an end to Israel's exile, speedily, in our own day, Amen.

XXXII.

בָּהָר

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this Sabbath, we read: "A year of rest shall it be unto the land." The people of Israel had to look far into the future. They had settled upon a limited territory. The only means of securing food for future generations were conservation and production. Rotation and occasional fallow will conserve the soil.

To have all land under grass once in seven years, and, at the same time permit animals to roam freely over the fields, will fatten the soil, and the yields of the six years, if the rules of rotation will be followed, will more than compensate for the loss of one year's crop.

The surface of the best ground is not more than from eight to ten inches thick; and if no proper care is taken it will deteriorate year by year, until its productiveness will be reduced to a minimum.

Fruit-trees, too, must be left in their natural state for a time. Aiding nature is helpful only in a way, but to rely upon artificial means for the continual production of crops is an irreparable error.

The first Sabbatical year in Jewish history was proclaimed fourteen years after the people of Israel landed in Palestine. It had taken seven years to conquer the savage tribes and establish order, and seven more years to have the land surveyed, bounded, divided among the tribes, and subdivided in homesteads. Accordingly, the eve of Rosh-ha-Shanah of the year 2503, witnessed the dawn of a Sabbatical year in Canaan. It is now 5688, or, three thousand one hundred and eighty-five years, since the era of Israel's nationalism was formally proclaimed in Eretz Yisrael.

A nation that knew the secrets of conservation of natural resources thirty-two centuries ago can not go under in a world of plenty.

A people who knew thirty-two centuries ago the value of material things for the sake of being able to preserve its spiritual life, can not be put out of existence by modern civilization which is endeavoring to find the remedies for material waste long since employed by it.

God intended the people of Israel to be His forever. Within the nature of things, as history chronicles, no nation exists forever, unless it resorts to assimilation. Then it is no longer that nation which had an independent career.

The laws given to the people of Israel are in-

tended to be applicable to the conditions which human beings may bring about in the course of their development. These laws can never become obsolete, out of date, or out of harmony with whatever a true civilization might propound.

Every commandment in our Torah has a physical as well as a spiritual meaning. Man must not waste his body. He must not indulge in things which are harmful to his body. He must not cramp seventy years' life in one year. He must not become over-civilized, shut up and barred up by thousands of inches thickness of polish upon his natural self.

He must revert to the natural state at intervals. The thickness of man's hide is not nine or ten inches. It is much less than that.. Work is a blessing; but overwork is a curse. Production is a necessity, but overproduction is a ruination. Voluntary work is a delight; slavery is a dungeon of darkness.

The soul is chained to the desires of the body. It gets its recreation only when the body is unoccupied with earthliness. The soul must have freedom, as well as the body must have rest.

The soul aids man in his work by day, and dreams for him his dreams by night. But, that is not what the soul needs. It requires conscious ef-

fort, purposeful achievement. It can not do it, save when there are no physical burdens to carry.

The Sabbath, the commandment to study the Torah, the Torah itself afford man what his soul really craves for.

I feel blessed that my Bar-Mitzvah falls on this Sabbath. I am able to feel the joy of my soul. It is both a Sabbath and a Sabbatical experience to me.

May Almighty restore to Zion the years of work as well as the Sabbatical years, Amen.

XXXIII.

בחקותי

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons unto the Lord, according to thy valuation." The sages of the Midrash, in interpreting these Verses, comment thereon, saying: "For, who in the skies can be compared unto the Lord, asks the Psalmist. The Holy One, blessed is He! said: He who can do the work I do, may compare himself to Me. Said Rabbi Levi: Once upon a time there was a king in a country who made two great arc-lights, which continued to burn by day and by night without interruption. The king, wanting to inspire confidence in his reign, gave out a proclamation saying: 'Whosoever will be able to make two arc-lamps like unto the ones I made, and if they will continue to burn by day and by night without interruption, you may worship, and freely, without the least fear of my jealousy. Even so, the Holy One, blessed is He: did. He created the heavens and set in them two great lights, the sun and the moon, who give light by day and by night to the whole world. If there be any among man who can create

two lights like unto these, they may share equality with Him."

Every person has his value. Life itself is of value, in proportion to what the one who enjoys life does with it..

There are two kinds of values. When a person is in a hot desert, walking under a scorching sun, he will give a thousandfold more than the value for a glass of cold water. But a glass of cold water has a standard value as such, in a land where water is plentiful.

Values are, therefore, relative. In relation to what a thing may do, must its value be estimated.

In this material age, in a material world, the standard of values is established, in the language of commerce, by the amount of money it can fetch at the market.

But there are certain things in life which can not be valued in that sense at all. A mother's love can not be marketed. It has a great value; but only to the recipient. A son knows the value thereof. But can a son measure that value in a commercial sense?

A rich orphan would give all he has in money to have his mother resurrected and enjoy motherly love. Some faithless son, who has an old mother,

places no value at all on his mother's love, and even desecrates it by ill-treating his mother.

Indeed, there are things which we feel and know that they exist, and yet we are unable to standardize them by the earthly standard of life.

If I were asked to give evidence to prove the existence of things spiritual upon earth, what I just said is ample evidence, if only one reflects and has sound judgment to reach out for an honest conclusion.

The joy I now experience as a newly-enlisted soldier in God's army can not be valued by me in the terms of money, or other things of an intrinsic worth. The whole ado about me is not of an earthly nature. It is not a mere birth-day celebration. I have had that.

I am Bar-Mitzvah—a son of the commandments. I am now obligated to serve God. Every commandment which a member of the House of Israel fulfills is of value to the whole people of Israel; but who can put a price on it?

I am now assuming obligations which will be of incalculable value to me throughout my lifetime. It will teach me moderation, organized self-restraint, self-respect, reverence for things which others consider sacred, and ambition to carry my undertakings to a successful goal.

I feel happy in the knowledge I now possess. My happiness, though, can not be compared to the happiness of a matured man. But who can put a value, an estimate on happiness? The body might be satisfied; but happiness belongs to the soul. And, as I am now about to enter upon the serious ends of life, I am in duty bound to invoke the sanction of Almighty God to my solemn resolutions.

May He, Who is in heaven above and provides for the smallest upon earth beneath, grace my actions with sacredness, that all my deeds be directed toward Him. May He look down with favor upon my new duties as a member in the folds of His people. I pray to Thee, O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to shower Thy blessings upon my dear parents, and this sacred congregation, and give them long life and health to be able to fulfill Thy bidding upon earth. And, mayest Thou bring a Redeemer to Zion, Amen.

XXXIV.

במדבר

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the portion of our Torah which we read this Sabbath, it is said: "The children of Israel shall pitch by their fathers' houses; every man with his own standard, according to the ensigns." Upon this Verse the sages of the Midrash elaborate, saying: "Each tribe had a special standard, with a special coat-of-arms on every standard. Reuben's standard had mandrakes upon it as its coat-of-arms; Simeon's, the City of Sechem; Juda's, a lion; Issachar's, a large-boned ass; Zebulun's, a house; Ephraim's, an ox; Menasseh's, a wild-ox; Benjamin's, a wolf; Dan's, a serpent; Naphtali's, a hind-let-loose; Gad's, a military company; Asher's, an olive."

Orderliness, discipline, obedience and precision are essential to a busy and active life. The Jewish people in the wilderness had to be under the strictest discipline possible in order to make any progress in their wanderings. It was necessary that their camps be recognized from a distance by the officers in command.

But the details given in our Torah are there, because they have a permanent value, because they are of the greatest benefit to posterity. The Torah omits nothing which is of real consequences, but omits everything which was merely a detail at the time being.

The Talmud teaches us that no two persons can ever be really alike, either in appearance or in inclination. They must differ and vary. No two persons, exactly alike, ever lived.

If everybody wanted to be watchmakers, who would mend our clothes? If everybody wanted to be druggists, who would be our tanners? If everybody wanted to be bakers, who would make our shoes?

It is, therefore, to the greatest benefit of the human race that not all are inclined to follow the same calling, engage in the same profession, study the same subject. The many contrasts compose one great harmony.

If a man had to make his own shoes, his own clothes, his own bread, his own hat, his own dwelling-place, and his own meals, how far could the world move in a century?

The only tribe that had neither standard nor coat-of-arms was the tribe of Levi. The Torah

was their standard; the priesthood their coat-of-arms, and service their most sacred heritage.

Their camp was known by everybody. They needed no other mark of identification. In a measure, the scholar to-day should be treated that way. What other banner should a scholar need, besides the banner of his learning?

The tribes had their respective flags, ensigns and tents. They also had their respective characteristics. But they all had one common objective, to serve their God and lead a life which gives comfort to the body and sacredness to the soul. No other purpose in life was as yet found.

In this age, when the people of Israel is no longer divided in tribes, we all have one common heritage, our Torah by which to live. We have often-times been called upon to die for the Torah, and we have a list of martyrs which reaches out to ages most remote and even touches this generation.

Nevertheless, we still have the recollection of the ancient orderly division of the tribes. It was not a division growing out of internal disagreement, or disruption, as we have often had to face in the very midst of Israel; it was, rather, one grand army, divided into magnificent divisions, regiments and companies. The standards were not for the sake of showing up the foundations for an

ultimate separation, but, rather, as an indication of brotherly marks of identification.

It is in this sense that our Torah, as we read this morning, charged the wanderers in the wilderness, saying: "The children of Israel shall pitch by their fathers' houses; every man with his own standard, according to the ensigns."

It is the man without a standard in life who is hardest to identify. But the people of Israel have been the standard-bearers of God thousands of years; and their ensign is known even in the remotest corner of the globe.

I, therefore, feel that my soul rejoices in being counted in among the real standard-bearers of God's Truth upon earth. I shall not fall out of line; I will not surrender the flag; I will, with the help of Almighty, endeavor, along with the rest of Israel, to plant it upon Mount Zion, Amen.

XXXV.

נשא

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen : This beautiful custom in Israel, to permit a mere lad to stand up before a sacred congregation of worshippers and address them, has a deep meaning to me, and is expressive of the system of democracy in Judaism.

I grew up in this environment. I accompanied my father to services. I saw many lads standing here, as I do now, and speaking to you, and promising you and their parents, as I do now, to be loyal to Judaism, and faithful to the Jewish people.

I believe that any boy, who is of normal mind and sound body, if he became Bar-Mitzvah in a proper manner, is to-day a very useful member of society in general and of the people of Israel in particular. This impressive way of teaching a young boy the way to worship God and revere parents, the way to love mankind and respect elders, the way to be a friend and a companion, is not only soul-inspiring to the boy himself but even acts as a great lesson for everybody witnessing a Bar-Mitzvah ceremony.

Of course, the first joy belongs to the parents. My father and mother have brought me here, to dedicate my life to the service of God, to embrace my brethren as blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh. I feel no longer a stranger in your midst. I am one of yourselves. My parents feel the happiness of having given to the society they love best something which no love or money can buy; they brought a son to their people, saying to them: "Receive him in kindness; treat him right; he is yours as well as ours";

Then comes your joy. You had no trouble in my being; you even knew very little of my existence. Little boys must not become known before their time. And, now I am here. Yours to serve God; yours to share whatever God has in store for His people; yours to help carry the burden; yours in joy and in sorrow. You feel that I am yours as well as I feel that you are mine.

What is this chain, this golden thread, this magnet which draws us together and keeps us together?

I noticed this morning, as I did on many other Sabbaths and holidays that three distinct classes of men were called up to grace the Torah. The first one was a Cohen; the second, a Levite, and then Israelites.

The Cohen traces descent as far back as Aaron,

brother of Moses, the first High-Priest; the Levite traces descent also to that tribe, the Tribe of Levi, who gave priests and scholars to the people of Israel.

In this fact I see the purity of my race, as such. I see an hundred generations of Israel's saints and martyrs, carrying banners of truth throughout the ages, yielding their lives with a ringing cheer for the purity of the race, defying the enemy with a triumphant look in their eyes at the very time the enemy thought he had them subdued!

In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read in our Torah: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: 'Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying: On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel; ye shall say unto them; The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace'."

The sages, in commenting on these blessings, have this to say: "The Lord bless thee," with the blessings written in the Torah, saying: 'Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out; blessed shalt thou be when thou comest into this world, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out of this world to enter the World-to-Come; thou shalt be blessed above all peoples.'

'And keep thee' even as it is said: 'The Lord shall keep thee from all evil.'

'The Lord make his face shine upon thee,' means: that He shall bestow upon thee a beaming countenance, by studying and understanding the Torah, even as it is said: "For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is light"; and as it is furthermore said: that He will bestow upon thee a beaming countenance when thou shalt be redeemed, even as it is said: "In Thy light we will see light"; and which, moreover, means: That the Holy One, blessed is He! will be unto thee a light, even as it is said: "The Lord is my light," and it is again said: "In the light of the King's countenance is life"; and as it is again said: "The Lord is God, and hath given us light"; and as it is even again said: "May He cause His face to shine upon us".'

'And be gracious unto thee,' means: that he shall give thee sons, even as it is said: "God be gracious unto thee, my son"; and as it is again said: "God be gracious unto us, and bless us."

'The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee,' means: that He shall receive thy prayers willingly, even as it is said: "Behold I have accepted thy countenance."

'And give thee peace,' means: to bless thee with the kind of peace written in the Verses, saying: "And I will give peace in the land"; Great peace have they that love Thy Torah; Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river; And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children'."

May Almighty give this day His will to accept our prayers, so that the blessings, as interpreted by our Rabbis, be fulfilled, Amen.

XXXVI.

בְּהַעֲלֹתָךְ

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the sacred portion of our Torah read to us this Sabbath morning, it is said: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: 'Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him: When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof so as to give light in front of the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses'."

The ancient sages of Israel, in their comment on these Verses, elaborate, saying: "Israel pleaded with Almighty; Thou art the light of the world; light abides with Thee, and, yet, unto us thou sayest: 'Light the seven lamps in front of the candlestick'? And, Almighty replied: 'I do not need your light: All light comes from Me; But I charge you to light the seven lamps, so that the peoples of the world will say: Behold, How Israel lights seven lamps in honor of Him Who created the light of the world."

We are charged to light the Menorah "in front."

I bless God for giving me a breath of life this day, thirteen years ago. I am happy in being Bar-Mitzvah on this Sabbath. It gives me an added source of joy. I feel elated. Not alone by the holiday itself, which is, indeed, something to be happy over, and proud of.

But my added source of happiness is this charge to Aaron to light the seven lamps "in front."

If only my people would pay attention to the significance of this commandment in connection with the lighting of the Menorah!

My young mind is too new to the ways of the world, to be able to grasp very serious subjects. But plain, every-day things I can see.

I noticed that some of my people are very careful not to light the flame of God in the presence of others; they evidently do not want to light the seven lamps "in front." When a Jewish holiday comes about, many of my brethren fear to make open demonstrations; they are not willing to let the world know their Hebrew culture, their Jewishness. In the presence of non-Jews, some of my brethren are not over-willing to manifest their inclination to observe Jewish laws or customs.

In public, many of my brethren are trying not to appear so distinctly Jewish. I often hear Jewish

children relating in a proud tone the fact that they were not taken, by their non-Jewish playfellows, for Jews. And, the non-Jewish boys and girls, if they have a desire to please a Jewish friend, eagerly pay that compliment to them; for they consider it a very great compliment.

Evidently the same might be true among the grown-ups, in the store, in the shop, in the factory, in the hospitals, in the courts, in the colleges, in the theatres, in the banks, on the street, on the stock-exchange, at festive boards, at public functions, in the halls of congress, on the steamers, even in airships - when there are non-Jewish passengers.

To my mind, all such people make a mistake, the mistake of their lives. The hardest thing for a Jewish boy or girl, and, I surmise, for a Jewish man or woman, is to hide his or her identity.

As a newly initiated son of the commandments I promise to always light my seven lamps "in front." I shall never add to the hypocrisy of this world. There is enough of that now, without the people of Israel giving a share to overfill its measure.

With this resolution solidly founded within my soul, I face my future without a trace of fear. If the name of Israel is respected among the nations, then let me be an Israelite in the open. Let me

show the world how I light the seven lamps for Him who created light for all the world. And, if the nations despise Israel, I shall not try to avoid, coward-like, the punishment which I consider, and every Jew should consider, a badge of honor.

May Almighty God strengthen me. May He bless my parents, and bless you all. May He bring an end to the narrowness of man's mind, so that no one will give ear to prejudice, nor sanction to bigotry, Amen.

XXXVII.

הַשׁ

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I see my father and mother looking upon me with beaming countenances. I know that they feel happy. By looking up to them, I know that I belong to them. They reared me; they educated me; they invited all of their friends here; they made a holiday for my sake; they brought me to dedicate my life to the religion so dear to them; to proclaim my connection with the people of Israel, the rock whence they were hewn.

I see you all. You, too, belong to the people of Israel. And, there are, please God! many more besides you; about fifteen millions of them; May God increase their number!

But where are they all? Where is the seat of the Jewish government? Where is the land, which is a Jewish land?

It is, indeed, a long story to tell, a story all of you know, and, therefore, spare me the pain to recount that story.

I studied in the public school some history of the American nation, the nation of which we are

a part, as citizens. That story, too, is fascinating. It grasped my mind, and eagerly did I await the chapters which were to follow daily.

I know that America is a country; that Americans have a government; that the American nation is recognized the world over as a nation. English is its language; a republic is its form of government; and liberty for all its inhabitants is the foundation upon which the American institutions are built.

I love America. It is my native land. I know no other land; my life belongs to it.

I studied in Hebrew school, too, and was told a far different story; a story which has to do more with my soul, with my God; than with my physical, or material well-being.

It is the story of my people; the people which gave me life.

I know that my people is not a political entity, living under one common form of government, in one territory. I was told that my brethren are scattered throughout the five continents.

I know that we have a Holy Land. That land was given to the Fathers of our people, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I know we lived there under a republican form of government, under a monar-

chy, and under a protectorate. I know that there was a division between Judah and Israel, that the Ten Tribes were lost, that we lived in Babylon for a short period, and returned and rebuilt our national home, and that we were finally scattered in many lands of exile. I also know that even at the present day, there are close to two hundred thousand of my brethren heroically struggling with fate to rebuild the ancient Homeland of Israel.

But my heart is filled with bitterness against the very first messengers who brought back evil reports against our homeland, the very first time they beheld it, even before Israel partook one meal made of the grain of Palestine.

We read about them in the Sidrah of this Sabbath. There were ten against two who brought an evil report of Palestine. They wanted to dishearten the pioneers who eagerly awaited the day when they would be rid of the wilderness, of all its curses and even of all its blessings. They were tired of the Manna; tired of the miraculous bread; tired of everything which was made ready for them without the least effort on their part. They wanted work, to tire themselves out, to sweat with honest labor; they wanted to have a home, not to dread the wandering by day and the feeling of homelessness by night.

It is a chapter in the Jewish history, written in our Torah as a reference for future generations. Otherwise the details of the entire episode were unnecessary; they certainly reflect no credit on any one of that generation. But it is in our Torah for a purpose, to teach us, to be a guide to us when moments such as those that Israel lived through while in the wilderness will ever again confront us.

We are now confronted by just such moments. And history repeats itself.

I am an American-born boy. I am Bar-Mitzvah to-day. I know that America means life to me. But that does not at all prevent me from loving my race, my people, the people of Israel and its homeland. On the contrary, because I knew no land of exile, thanks to Almighty for having brought my parents here before I was born! I feel it more so in my soul than, perhaps, one who can not claim nativity in a land comparable to this sweet land of liberty.

It is, to my mind, though young and inexperienced I be, a great error that the fifteen millions of the world's Jewry do not now aid the work of the pioneers in Palestine, so that the settlement there will consist of at least ten per cent of the Jews now living in diaspora. "A million-and-half homeland" would give the Jews a great deal more respect among the nations than they now enjoy.

But the only reason why no such number can live in Palestine at the present time is repeated in our Torah just read to us. One word expresses it all: MERAGLIM!

Even though I be following a minority, I will be in the ranks of Caleb and Joshua; I will never join the ranks of the traitors to their own people.

I am now a son of The Commandments! There are many commandments connected with life in the Holy Land. I pray to God to spare my life to be able to come to Palestine, to the Holy Land of my fathers, and find there a sufficient number of my brethren, gathered once more under the standard of God, with a Holy Temple rebuilt, and there fulfil the commandments I am unable to fulfil outside of the Holy Land, Amen.

XXXVIII.

קָרְחָה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: Leadership is not given to, nor does it fall in the lot of, every man. I know the nature of my own playfellows; some of them are leaders, but the great majority of them follow the leaders.

Whatever the cause, I believe that a leader is appointed not by man but by Divine Will.

Some men were prophets; some women were prophetesses. The ones who were not so distinguished could not, and often did not want to, understand that phenomenon in human life upon earth.

In my inexperience I was privileged to observe things among my own playfellows which prove conclusively that leaders among man are born. I noticed that some boys always desire the other fellow to lead the way. I also noticed that other boys will be at the head of things by common consent, although, some time, it is not by common consent but by sheer audacity.

But why do some boys have that audacity, and other boys have it not? To my inexperienced way

of thinking, I believe that the audacious ones are not actual leaders, but mere interlopers, who envy their betters; and what they can not obtain by good will they are trying to grab by force, by threats, by nasty means, and oftentimes by actual violence.

The gentle soul which was destined to become great during its short span of life upon earth is, without a doubt in my mind, a direct messenger of God, as were the prophets of yore, even as the soul of our Master Moses was.

Moses received his appointment to minister to his people, direct from God. It is so recorded in our Torah. He did not, in the least, desire it. He certainly was not looking for it, when he beheld the Flame in the Thorn-Bush. He was a patriot who loved his people, and could stand no violence regardless of who the perpetrator was.

The people of Israel believed in him; believed in God and in Moses, Moses His servant. He offered to sacrifice his life, when God wanted to destroy the people he so dearly loved. To him the whole people could not sin. He forgave them the affair with the "molten god." He wanted to die and let them live.

Now comes Korah and succeeds in getting together two-hundred and fifty audacious conspirators, and faces Moses, saying: "Ye take too much

upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

Moses pleads with Korah, not that he feared his threats, or his insinuations, but because he did not desire to harm even Korah and his followers.

God had to create "a new thing," the ground opened her mouth, in order to sustain the leadership of Moses. It was in no sense a revolution. Whatever was done, whatever charge was given to the children of Israel, came direct from God. Moses was the messenger of God. Korah maintained, as the Talmudic sages testify, that Moses only spoke in the name of God. The test came about fast and decisive.

I find the lesson of this portion of our Torah of the greatest benefit to me. We must believe in our leaders, particularly our spiritual leaders, who are the messengers of God. They bring to us that which our soul craves for. And, even this is one of our commandments, to hearken to the Rabbi in his time, whenever and wherever he will bring a message from God's Torah.

In standing here before you, on the day of my Bar-Mitzvah, I feel that this Sabbath is of great significance to me, for the welfare of my soul upon earth throughout my lifetime.

May Almighty bless all Israel with great and sincere leaders, worthy of being true followers of Moses; leaders who deserve to stand upon holy ground; and may He bless Israel to witness the rise of a rebuilt Zion, Amen.

XXXIX.

חֲקָת

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the wonderful chapters of the Sidrah read to us this Sabbath, it is said: "And there was no water for the congregation."

The Talmudic sages elaborate on this Verse, saying: "When the children of Israel went forth out of Egypt, there arose for them three good providers, namely: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. For the sake of Moses, they got the Manna; for the sake of Aaron, the pillars of cloud by day and of flame by night accompanied them throughout their wanderings in the wilderness; and for the sake of Miriam, a well of water was ready for them wherever they alighted and pitched their tents. When Miriam died, the well of water no longer appeared; when Aaron died the pillars of cloud and flame no longer accompanied them; and when Moses died, the Manna ceased falling from the heavens."

Miriam died. "There was no water for the congregation." God commanded Moses to speak to the rock, that it may yield water. Moses smote the rock, and it did yield water. Because Moses

did not speak to, but smote the rock, God's wrath was pronounced, and a Heavenly decree was issued against Moses and Aaron that neither of them should bring the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

In the three great Providers, Moses, Aaron and Miriam are exemplified three great principles. Moses was the staff and stay, the bread, the Manna, of the people. Aaron was the lover and pursuer of peace, of respectability, of polite culture, of a life without murmuring and protests. Miriam was the paragon of simplicity, humility, and submissiveness. Water runs by gravity, from the higher to the lower place. They all had a great influence upon the people as a whole. They were the physical as well as the spiritual providers of the people of Israel during their forty years' wandering in the wilderness.

Miriam died. The spirit of submissiveness, of docility, of humility departed from the camps of Israel. There was the great example of water missing. Miriam's influence was gone. They demanded water in a loud voice; the protests were unusual. The entire people rose up. It became hardened. It could no more be moved than solid rock.

And, God said to Moses and Aaron: "And speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, that it give forth

its water." According to the sages of the Midrash, God wanted the people of Israel to mind the event and learn a lesson. The rock, which can not be punished for disobedience, when spoken to, yielded its water; how much more shall they, who can be punished for disobedience, yield when spoken to in the name of God!

But Moses smote the rock; he thought that the people, being in such rebellious mood, would not listen to words. He showed them that they, too, can be smitten in order to yield. This displeased God. The children of Israel should be spoken to; but no one must ever apply the rod against them.

It is for this lesson in the Torah, read to us this Sabbath, that I am most thankful.

We have no such Providers in our wanderings to-day. We need the great example of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

I am happy that my mother had the influence of a Miriam over me. Her patience, her simplicity, her humility in bringing me up, in speeding me on to school, and to Talmud Torah daily; her silent love, her sweet temper, her affectionate embrace cheered me up and gave me that ambition to make good, to be good, and to stay good.

In my father, the provider, the one who brought the Manna, I found the example of Moses. He

spoke to me, when I erred. I would not now mind even if he had applied the rod, for I know I deserved it many times. But he spoke to the rock. True I did not always yield. But I will carry the lessons he gave me, with honor and dignity, all my life.

In my Hebrew teacher I found the example of Aaron. He shielded me with a pillar of cloud from the scorching sun, and lit up my path with a pillar of flame by night. He taught me how not to be dazzled by overmuch prosperity, by too much sunshine during my days, and not to be dismayed in adversity, by darkness during my nights. He instructed me to pray, to believe in God, to know the history of my people, to know our Torah!

I pray that God grant my father, my mother and my teacher long life and health. I pray to Him to bless you all with the blessings from His Heavenly Jerusalem, Amen.

XL.

בָּקָר

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: If I were to be asked what Verse of our Torah strikes me most, I would, without hesitation, say this one: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwellings, O Israel!"

It is impressed upon my mind and conscience, because it was uttered by an arch anti-Semite; by an enemy, hired to curse the people of Israel.

It strikes me most because of what I hear on the street, and often read in newspapers about the opinion of the anti-Semites of Jewish homes, houses of worship, and Jewish society generally.

The repenting anti-Semite is a weak animal. He is like unto a coward who strikes one in the back with a sharp instrument, but when he finds himself foiled in the attempt he turns around and says: "please don't mind my bit of mischief; I was only joking anyhow."

The anti-Semite is like unto an evil reptile that always happens to fall in your dish. It is scalded, but it also spoils your dish.

A dog that eats its own vomit is more considerate for others than the anti-Semite who invents a

poisen, pens it, and sends it throughout the world, and then eats his own potpourri.

Balaam was a mouth-hero; able to bring out words which carried venom to the farthest corners of the then known world.

The enemies of Israel, according to the Midrashic sages, thinking that Moses, too, is a knight of the mouth only, thought of finding Balaam an even match for him. They believed that Balaam would undo with his mouth what Moses accomplished with his.

And, ever since the appearance of Balaam as a prospective mouthpiece of the world's anti-Semites, many endeavored to imitate the effort, but only few had the courage to praise the Jews instead of slandering them, as Balaam did.

The Sifre says: Among Israel there never arose a prophet like unto Moses; but among the Heathens there was a prophet like unto Moses, and that one was Balaam.

Moses was like unto the Eagle; as the light of the day increased Moses could see the farthest.

Balaam was blind on one eye physically; but in his prophecy he could not see at all in day-light. He was like unto the bat. In gross-darkness it can see. Its time of toil is by night. Balaam saw in the

dark; his work was in the dark; his power was in the dark. He could never meet Moses; the eagle and the bat can never fly together.

Balaam praised the people of Israel, not because that was his inclination; the truth came out from his mouth despite his desire. God ordered him to do so. The forces of darkness, too, are under the control of God; else none could live upon earth.

In my experience as a boy, I like best the boy that casts a stone, with intent to hit square in one's face, than the sneak who spits poison, hisses and rattles, and claims he is only doing it for fun.

The open anti-Semite, who is out for a killing, can easily be identified—and challenged. But the anti-Semitic propagandist is the real menace. He is a Balaam, without the least fear of God.

As a mere lad, I should rather listen to than give advice; but in my own dealings with boys of the Balaam type gave me sound lessons, and, I will say, good experience. The only remedy, the only antidote for anti-Semitism is—never to be afraid, to treat his attacks with scorn, to avoid discussion with him, to get along without him, not to know that he exists.

Why crowd where I am not welcome? Must I be miserable in order to be able to say: "I had a good

time" in a club, where I know I am not welcome, in a company which is composed of Jew-baiting individuals.

The whole world is not anti-Semitic.

Every noble act of a Jew, is a thorn in the side of all Balaamites every achievement of the Jews as a people is a cup of bitterness in the throat of the Jew-baiter.

By raising the standard of behavior, of conduct, of life itself to the level of our Torah, our own company will be so delightful that we will not notice the bad boys around us. They will want to be counted in as good company for us.

In my young mind these thoughts course through, and I feel that it is the will of God, so that we will not completely be assimilated, and in this way disappear from history.

I join your forces to-day. I am Bar-Mitzvah. I am, henceforth, to be your equal. I claim no greater share in the glory of Judaism than is my due. But when duty will call me, I will perform it as if I alone had to do it all.

In my last sentence, my dear parents, you should find all the promises that you expected of me.

May God silence forever the intended curses, and turn them into praises and blessings; may He

turn the minds of our enemies that they all be our friends; for we are enemies to no one. I recognize that He alone is the Father of all mankind; that the souls of all men are pure, only the evil thoughts of man are wicked from his childhood. May He cause them all to repent. And may you all be blessed with the dew of heaven and the fat places on the earth, Amen.

XLI.

פִּינְחָס

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "Therefore say unto him: 'Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace'."

Phinehas is the holder of the covenant of God's peace.

A great Talmudic sage, Resh-Lakish, said: "Phinehas is the selfsame prophet Elijah. The Holy One, blessed is He! said unto him: 'Thou didst make peace between me and the children of Israel; even in the Future to Come, thou wilt again make peace between Me and them, for it is said: Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers'."

To me this is the sweetest of all prophecies. It is the covenant of God's peace. It is the holiest mission. Only Elijah is deserving of carrying out such mission.

Elijah, to what Jewish heart does not that name sound sweet! The dear Elijah; he is everywhere; he loves everybody. When one is in pain and is suddenly relieved, it is the work of no other healer than Elijah; if one is poor and becomes rich it is his work. On Passover night, when all fathers are kings and all mothers queens, who comes to toast them? Elijah. When a boy is initiated into the covenant of Abraham, who occupies the seat of honor and gives a blessing? Elijah. When a mother, longing to see an absent son, receives a surprise message that the son is coming, it is the good work of Elijah. Everything wonderful, beautiful, and delightful is the work of Elijah.

But, I believe that his greatest task still remains unperformed. The work of "turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" is still not accomplished.

A house divided against itself can not endure. The heart of the children must turn to their fathers. I know that then Elijah's work would be simplified a great deal, as the heart of the fathers would surely respond to the demand of the children.

Elijah's mission, in this field of endeavor, is much harder, more difficult to perform. It is so long since the fathers were children, that they

already forgot how the heart of a child beats; and how can a child know the thoughts of a father's heart, since he is a mere child and never as yet reached that state?

But wherein do the hearts of the fathers and the children differ?

And, has the difference ever existed?

And, if so, the distance between father and child should be, by now, as far as pole from pole.

And, yet, it is really not so pronounced. As a rule the child follows the footsteps of the father.

But Elijah's work, in accomplishing this mission is, nevertheless, not so simple, even though there exists no apparent difference between father and child.

By observing the great changes in the life of the Jewish people, particularly in the New World, the outward differences between parents and children do not exist. It is not heralded abroad. It is confined to the heart itself. Broken hearts there are many, though they are not exhibited.

If every child would obey the father, how much less trouble would parents have in bringing up children! I know the trouble I caused my dear parents before I realized that obedience is essential to my own happiness. Elijah did not reach my heart

soon enough to save my dear parents the pain of seeing me doing things contrary to their wishes.

In like measure, are our hearts doing contrary to the wishes of God. It takes an Elijah to make peace between God and His children.

May Almighty God speed the day when Elijah will come, so that he will, by the grace of Him Who Sits in Heaven, establish that covenant of peace between God and His children, and between parents and their children, Amen.

XLII.

מִתְוָה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah read to us this Sabbath, it is said : "And Moses said unto them : 'If ye will do this thing; if ye will arm yourselves to go before the Lord to the war, and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the Lord, until He hath driven out His enemies from before Him, and the land be subdued before the Lord, and ye return afterward; then ye shall be clear before the Lord, and before Israel, and this land shall be unto you for a possession before the Lord'."

The tribe of Gad, and the tribe of Rueben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, saw good land for their cattle. They wanted it. They had it given to them without much effort. In return for this favor they had promised to arm themselves and go over across the Jordan and help their brethren conquer the Promised Land.

And, it was on the strength of their promise that Moses spoke the words, just quoted, to them.

The sages of the Midrash, evidently disapproving the haste of these tribes, comment on it, saying :

"Concerning their action it is said: 'An estate may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.' Because these tribes took their share first, and in haste, Sennacherib, king of Assyria exiled them before any other tribe."

The working of the human mind can never be fathomed. There is a constant process of changes in the human being physically, and it is evident that man's mind is ever changing.

And, yet, we behold a certain sameness, a measure of uniformity in a people of a given cult, or culture, or territory. Not only is this true of a modern people, but even ancient peoples, or peoples descended from ancient peoples, manifest the same characteristics.

With the people of Israel this is more pronounced than with any other people of among the human race.

Our Talmudists tell us that "God did righteously in scattering the people of Israel among the nations." The reason given in the Talmud is "so that they would be able to gather proselytes from among the nations."

But the Jewish people never was a missionary people. In fact, every Jew detests the very sound

of the word “missionary,” because the greatest misery the Jewish people had to suffer was on account of missionaries, and mainly from ex-Jews who sold themselves, for a consideration, to act as missionaries.

But God did righteously in scattering the Jewish people in many lands, and did not segregate them in one land. For, had He done differently, that is, had He segregated them in one land, there would not have been a single Jew alive. Being in so many lands at the same time, it always happened that when one part of the world’s Jewry suffered the other part enjoyed prosperity; and in this way the suffering part was enabled to receive assistance.

The Jewish people is likened unto a dove; “It flies on one wing and rests the other.”

The tribes of Gad and Rueben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, when they suggested to remain on the good pasture land, Moses was angry, thinking that they would refuse to help their brethren who faced the enemy. But as they promised to go over as Haluzim, as armed aids, consent was given to them, to occupy the land of their choice.

Since that time, it is the characteristic of the Jewish people to aid their brethren who have to face the enemy, who suffer on account of Judaism.

The greatest sufferers now are the pioneers in Eretz Yisrael. It seems that the rest of Israel, having the good fortune to be in lands of plenty, have forgotten the agreement between the two-and-a-half tribes and the rest of the tribes of Israel.

It is, indeed, worthy of noting, that the present day Haluzim are not going to Palestine merely to help their brother-pioneers conquer the land. No, indeed. They are the very heart of the pioneer life of our rebuilt Zion; they are the ones who went there to be the conquerors, and they have no other land in mind. No, they have no other land at all.

That is the reason why the Haluzim of to-day are doing far greater work than the Haluzim of the days of Moses. In the days of Moses the Haluzim went to fight the enemy. All the rest God did for them, in having the land ready for cultivation. But the Haluzim of to-day go there to live and to die, to fight the rocks, the drought, disease, inflated land-prices, cheap labor as well as the enemy.

The sages of the Midrash, too, should be pleased, in their abode in Heaven above, with the sacred work of the modern Haluzim upon earth beneath. The Sennacheribs of to-day will not exile them the sooner because of their labor; as they do not work merely to pay for what they got in

good land. They have no land. They work so that we all might have the land.

What are we going to do for them?

Most of the commandments of the Torah can be fulfilled only in Palestine. As a new son of the commandments, I promise you, my dear father and mother, and all of you of this assembly, that I will never withhold my efforts from the work on hand now before my people.

We must not stand by, in our lands of plenty, and permit such conditions to be prevailing in our Homeland.

I pray to the God of Zion and Jerusalem that He instill in the hearts of His People the love and the desire to be His people, under His banner, in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Amen.

XLIII.

מִסְעֵי

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: Two distinct commandments are the outstanding features of the portion of the Torah we read this Sabbath. The first is: To provide homesteads for the Levites; and the second is, to provide cities of escape for such of among the inhabitants who will commit excusable homicide.

Our Torah is based upon true justice; the secret of true justice is known to none but God. The Torah is the Book of God.

The Levites were the carriers of the banner of the Torah. Of among the tribe of Levi were the priests and Levites. They all were deprived of secular activity. They were, therefore, not given any share in the land. They had no time to till it. They had to devote their lives to the service of God.

But they had to live. Their living had to be provided for them by others. God, therefore, commanded the people of Israel to give the priest and the Levite a share in all that the land produces, so that they might attend to their sacred duties undisturbed by earthly care.

The priests and Levite carried the whole spiritual burden of the people; the entire structure of the religious, cultural, moral, hygienic, and social life of the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites had to plan and construct.

In return for their labor, they were given their earthly sustenance. They were satisfied with that; they were under commandments of God to be satisfied with that.

In a greater field, the people of Israel was anointed at Mount Sinai to be “a kingdom of priests, an holy nation.”

The nations did not obligate themselves to support us in return for being the world’s priests. We were not promised to receive earthly reward in return for our sacred labors.

We had no special service to perform for the nations. Our only service belonged to God. By serving Him faithfully, we fulfilled our obligation of being “a kingdom of priests.”

Our reward was given to us. God brought us into Palestine, a land of “milk and honey.” He drove the savages out from before us. The only condition upon which we have received this reward was: Not to do that which is evil in the eyes of God; and to do that which is pleasing in His eyes.

We have not minded our true prophets, and we paid no attention to our true priests. There arose false prophets, and the priesthood became an office sold to the highest bidder. False prophets needed that kind of priests. They had to get birds of a feather.

No government is stronger than its weakest link of justice. The most precious thing under the sun is life. To take a life is the most wicked crime. To take a life by process of law is the most responsible duty a government can claim from the citizens of a country.

Innocence must never be punished. To take one innocent life, is cause enough to ruin a whole nation, for it may happen that such life, if it had been taken by the law of such nation, was a cause to bring guilt upon the entire nation.

When three, or more people kill one, they are all guilty; the same is true if a bad law, or the want of any law, is the cause of putting to death an innocent being.

The people of Israel were charged to set aside six cities of escape for the innocent slayer, to prevent him from being killed by near relatives of his victim.

The administration of justice in Palestine was intended to be such that all nations shall know that

that country is the habitation of a "kingdom of priests, an holy nation."

That was to be the reward of Israel, in return for his services as a priest for the whole world.

Before an architect begins building a great structure he makes a model. In that model he invests all of his skill. He works out every detail; makes safe every part; arranges every story; joins every part. Then, if the miniature stands the test, he knows that the great structure will be lasting.

Israel was intended as such by the Universal Architect. God wants all of His children upon earth to be in His service. He wanted a model nation upon earth, so that all nations will follow its example.

In two very important matters can a state be recognized without going far into the details of its civilization. Education and Justice.

If a nation has no regards for its teachers, is indifferent to its system of learning and cares very little about schools, the traveller needs not investigate further. He might find that such nation has a fine army, a great navy, plenty of prisons and penal institutions and great merchants. But he will know that the level of culture in such country is deeper than the Ghenna itself.

If a nation has no regard for justice, if the laws of a country are bad, or disregarded by its citizens, the traveller needs no further investigation as to the standard of civilization in such country. Its level is below the Ghenna's bottom.

Judaism set up a standard of education, by setting aside a whole tribe to supervise it; Judaism set up a standard of justice, by first providing protection for the innocent, and not by first creating hysteria against the suspected.

We lost all that. We mourn that loss. But we can regain it. By work. By helping others that work.

In my phylacteries: I can see the scale of justice in my hand, when I put the phylactery on my arm. I can see the banner of true education when I put the phylactery upon my head.

In every one of the commandments, which I am now obliged to keep, God gave both, the spiritual as well as the material meaning.

Palestine itself is both, spiritual and material. The sages of the Talmud aver that the very air of Palestine makes one wise. Of course, not when Palestine is desolate.

May Almighty God restore to us our sacred heritage; may He bless us with His blessings from Zion, Amen.

XLIV.

דברים

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: This Sabbath is called—Sabbath Hazon; a Sabbath of vision, because we read the Haphtorah from the first chapter of Isaiah, which begins with the words of Hazon, which means “vision.”

On this anniversary Sabbath, I become Bar-Mitzvah.

As a future member in the house of Israel, I must commence my duty by sharing alike with the rest of Israel the sentiment of the day.

This Sabbath belongs to the “Three Weeks!” During the Three Weeks we refrain from festivities, from marriage, and, generally, from optional pleasure.

We do it all, or rather, refrain from doing it, because it is the season of the anniversary of the destruction of both, the First and Second Temples.

We are also commanded by the Rabbis not to mourn openly on any Sabbath. Thus, although it is not a season of festivities, I am justified in celebrating my Bar-Mitzvah, not alone because I am just now thirteen years old, and, therefore, obliged

to take upon myself the duties of an Israelite, and release my dear father from the burden of carrying my sins any longer, but because, while being reminded of the great tragedies in Israel's history, I may be of some help in the future; I, and together with me, thousands of other lads of my people who will, like myself, soon grow into manhood.

We need builders. We can not physically build a structure thousands of miles away. We can not plow the fields of Palestine while living here; we can not plant orange-trees while living here; and we can not pave roads while living here. But we can, if we only have the desire, do all these while living here by extending an helping hand, not of charity, but an helping brotherly hand to the more fortunate of our brethren, who do things to rebuild our nation.

Behold, I stand before you. There sits my father, and there sits my mother. What sacrifices have they made in order to bring me till this age!

Imagine, my friends, had I been born in a land where actual persecution takes place, and there are many such lands even now, of what benefit would all my father's and my mother's efforts have been to me.

Thank God! I was born in "the land of the free,

and in the home of the brave." I am brave enough and free enough to speak out my mind.

Let me assure you, my friends, that had I been born in a land of persecution, I would have felt very little joy in becoming a son of the commandment. Not because I dislike the commandments of God; but because in such land, I would have been facing a very dark future. As a prospective student I would have found the doors of the higher branches of learning and of the better professions shut in my face. As a prospective artisan, trader, or craftsman I would have had to reduce my standard of living—for the Jewish standard of living is high, and expensive—to a level almost equal with that of the semi-civilized.

All of these I fear not, living in America. But what about my thousands, nay, tens or hundreds of thousands of little brothers who become Bar-Mitzvah in the lands of persecution? What of their future? Of their lives?

If there was no remedy, I would shed a tear for every one of them, even on the Sabbath, even on my own holiday. But there is no need shedding tears for their sake. They can not be helped with tears.

They can and will be helped by other means than tears, sympathy, or vain protests.

They can be helped by uniting all the forces, the young forces, of the world's Jewry. A united world Jewry will create enough material resources in Palestine to help a great number of the brave boys and girls, who would, if they could, kiss the stones of Palestine, and then make them into material for homes.

Of course, I will help, when I will have the strength that is necessary for such help.

If my Bar-Mitzvah means anything to me, it certainly is significant that it falls on Sabbath Hazon. I enter upon the ruins of my people's national past; but the self-same means which were employed by the ancient Israelites are at our disposal now. The only source of their ability then was the Torah. That is as whole as it was on the Day of Revelation. That is indestructible.

I embrace the Torah on this day, when I assume all obligations it imposes upon me. And, with the Divine help, which I now invoke, I faithfully promise that in whatever way I will be able to do it, I shall work to the end that all of us will see a rebuilt Zion, Amen.

XLV.

וְאַתָּה נָנָן

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen : This is Sabbath Nahamu. So named after the opening word of the immortal Verses of Isaiah, just read as to-day's Haphtorah.

In the short period I was permitted by Almighty to live upon earth, I was privileged to witness many events which have made an ever-lasting impression upon me; and, from all things which are yet not very clear in my mind, one thing appears very clear, and that is: My full faith in the greatness of the ideals of our religion.

I am raised among all classes and races, in a country of a mixed population ; but I feel that the words of the prophets which promise a home for Israel must come true. When I first began to study the Book of God, my heart swelled with pride to know that I am a descendant of those great men who were so near God in all their doings.

To live and hope, and hope and live has been the lot of my people for a long, long time. So the great history of my people tells. I shall live and hope, hope and live, till I feel certain that my duty towards my people has been performed. Despite

all and every thing disadvantageous that may come in my way, my efforts shall everlastinglly be directed toward the goal of the people of Israel.

My life has been but thirteen years—a brief period in the course of the history of my people; but having been in the home of my parents, who are faithful and loyal members of the House of Israel, I was fortunate in gaining much information about the needs of my people, and, therefore, do I here, amidst these sacred surroundings, consecrate as much of my service as my life's work will permit to the cause of my people.

This Sabbath is known throughout Israel as Sabbath-Nahamu. Only the bereaved need comforting; only they that sustain great losses need words of comfort from fellow-men; only such nation which is exiled feels a new pulse-beat at every word of comfort uttered by friends. On many occasions have I heard that we did lose much as a nation; that we have no home; that we are exiles. Along with all Israel I feel a new thrill of life, when I think of the comforting words of the greatest of all the prophets since Moses. I am happy that I have been privileged to study the words of this great prophet, Isaiah. The future he pictures for our nation; the words of comfort he gives to all those that suffer his memorable saying:

"And he will lift up an ensign unto the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel; and the dispersed of Judah will he collect together from the four corners of the earth," make me feel that even though our people continue many more generations in exile, we still have the greatest ideal in the career of the entire human family to cherish!

A member among a people, having such ideals as its goal upon earth as described in our sacred writings, feels not only proud that he was given the privilege to become a member of such people, but his entire ambition must be directed to become an honor to such people. I shall, my dear parents, and members of the house of Israel, try to consecrate my life to the service of Israel; I shall, with the help of God, shape my conduct so as not to make any of you sorry; I shall devote my service to the sacred calling of Israel among the nations. And, now, my dear parents, I thank you for the care you have had in bringing me up thus far in my life's journey; henceforth I am to act on my own responsibility. And, I pray to Almighty to guide my footsteps that I may not stumble in the wrong direction; to shield me against evil company; to aid me in distress; and support me in the hour of need, Amen.

XLVI.

עקב

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: On this Sabbath we read in the Torah, saying: "And it shall come to pass, because ye hearken to these ordinances, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep with thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers. And he will love thee, and bless thee."

The word which every English version of the Torah translates as "because," is pronounced in Hebrew "Akeb." Akeb, is also Hebrew for "heel."

The Midrashic sages elaborated on this word, and maintained, that the Verses just quoted do not refer to the principal laws and ordinances, but to the minor laws, such as most people step on them with their heels.

And, there is justification for this interpretation of these Verses. There are small things in life which are forgotten, and yet, these very small things count much in life.

No one will consider a kind word, uttered to a stranger in passing him by on the street of any consequences; but it pictures to us the whole being

of the one who trained himself to such polite dealings, to such sweet intercourse with his fellow-men.

No one will compare the law of our Torah concerning murder with the admonition of our sages to receive every man in kindness and with a pleasant countenance. Yet, one who hates people, who receives them not with a kind countenance, is a potential murderer in the final analysis. A murderer among rational beings, is an impossibility; unless by training, environment, habit, and general conduct one acted rude, angry, impolite to elders, jealous of others, vengeful for the least provocation, and generally hating the society of people.

Of course, the example is given of two extremes; but the principle is here. Small beginnings make great ends. The thief never starts big. By not returning a needle borrowed from a neighbor, one starts on the road of dishonesty.

Our Torah teaches us that, "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God." But the very beginning must come when the man-to-be is still in his childhood.

I am happy that my dear parents implanted in my heart the ideal to fear God and respect men. I observed day by day the many little kindnesses my mother conferred upon me and others. I know

why she is to me so saintly, so divine. She observes even the little things which many step on them with their heels.

I am now a son of the commandments. I am in duty bound to keep them and observe them; to live by them, and, if necessary, die for them. In all sincerity, standing in this solemn moment, amidst such sacred surroundings, I offer my gratitude to my dear parents for having given me the opportunity of knowing something about the glories of the laws and commandments of our Torah. I will, with the help of God, ever cherish the wonderful aid given me by my parents.

May Almighty God bless them and keep them. And may He bless this entire assembly with His blessing from Zion, Amen.

XLVII.

הָאֶת

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I was taught to know that, according to the accepted belief of Israel, every man is the agent of his deeds or misdeeds.

To man is left the choice. He might be, by study, practice and belief a saint; and he might be by sin, ill-manners and hate, a very devil.

From the mouth of the Most High cometh not forth either the good or the evil. Every man, if he does good, has the good conferred upon him; if he does evil, he suffers the consequences thereof.

Man has free choice during his lifetime. There is nothing to stop him from doing evil, or urge him to do good, save his own choice, his own will, his own inclination.

The fear of God is in man's hand. He is punished, if he violates the laws of God; he is rewarded if he observes them. At his birth, it was not decreed that man should be either pious or wicked. That he has to accomplish by his own action.

But God is merciful. He wants all mankind to be good, live the good life, and enjoy of the good He has in store for the righteous. He, therefore, pointed out both, the good way, and the bad way, and charged man to select the good way; He moreover, pointed life and death out to every one of His children upon earth, and charged them to select life.

With the Torah before us, there is no excuse for any one saying: "I did not know what life is, or what death is; what good is, or what evil is."

My heart goes out to the many boys and girls, who really do not know the difference between life and death, good and evil. They know it not, because they were denied the opportunity of knowing it. They had no chance to study our Torah. Geography might teach one where a certain city is located, or where a certain thing grows; but it does not point out to him what path to follow in life. That spiritual geography is not taught in any school, from any text book, save from our Holy Torah.

Arithmetic might teach one how to count numbers, or make computations; but it does not teach him how to calculate the volume of sin one may pile up in a lifetime by following evil, or the total of good one stores away in a lifetime by following good.

History might teach one names, places, dates, incidents, wars, conquests, defeats and political or territorial strife; but it teaches not the names and places one will encounter in life which are best for one to avoid; or the names and places which are best for him to meet.

All of these the Torah teaches.

Particularly the portion of the Torah we read this Sabbath. "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day."

To me this Verse has a special significance, at least that concerning the "commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day."

"This day" is my Bar-Mitzvah. I become on "this day" a son of the commandment. On "this day" I want only blessings. I want the blessing on all other days. But, in order to have them, I, like all of you, must "hearken unto the commandments."

I promise you, my dear parents, and ladies and gentlemen, that I will hearken unto the commandments; that I will dedicate my efforts to that end.

May Almighty God aid me in this resolution,

and strengthen me in my efforts; may He bless you my dear parents, and all of you of this sacred congregation. May He restore the ancient glory to Zion, Amen.

XLVIII.

שופטים

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I stand alone now, unsupported, in my service as a full-fledged Jew, no longer by my father.

But a few minutes ago, my dear father delivered this blessing: "Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, for having released me from being punished for this one."

"This one," means me.

My dear father, I never intended to have you punished for me. I was a child; if I did commit a sin, it could not have been purposeful, or in spite, or with evil intentions toward you.

To you I owe everything in my life. My food, my clothes, my home, my education, whatever knowledge I have of things Godly, came to me by your efforts.

I desire to lighten your burden. God's charge to His people is to believe in Him. I do. He, further charged that His people should observe His commandments, six hundred and thirteen of them. Like all Israelites, I will observe them.

On this day, I have not sinned; unless it be a sin to have been the cause of such fuss; but even this is not for my sake, but to honor and glorify our Torah, the commandments.

The name Bar-Mitzvah is evidence enough that it is so.

If it be gracious in the eyes of the Lord, I would take over the pack of sins from you, my dear father. I will manage to wipe them off of the heavenly record by good deeds, in honoring you and my dear mother, and in being what you and my dear mother always wanted me to be.

In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set, in thine inheritance which thou shalt inherit, in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it."

Our ancient landmark is our tradition, the customs and laws our ancient fathers have set up for all times, to remain so as a citadel for the Torah and the Commandments.

We have inherited this landmark; it is an ancient landmark; it was set up by our fathers; it was recorded in history by their own blood; it was transmitted to us under fire, water and inquisition; it is ours by right of inheritance. Let us not remove it from our midst.

My young heart is filled with a thrill, when I look around and behold traces of heavenly customs, instituted by my forefathers. They speak to me. I see the beauty of their holiness; I hear the heavenly music expressing the joy of their birth amidst Israel. I do not want the tragic notes of their destruction.

I feel the touch of time on my head; not of my own years; but of the thousands of years which elapsed since my people took up its station to guard the path of God. I feel that I am now about to be placed somewhere as a sentinel.

If a trust of this kind will ever fall to my lot, no one will be able to get my ensign by surprise. I will be ready for any eventuality.

I feel the spirit of my father and my mother living in me at this moment, in a manner it never before did. They gave me the opportunity of life, living, education and service. I shall serve my people to the best of my ability. May God help me to keep this resolution, and aid me in the performance of same, Amen.

XLIX.

תַּנְא

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: Life is a constant war. I know it. I have to fight my way through. If it is not against the bully of the school, it is for better marks; if it is not for a good knowledge of Hebrew, it is for my ball-team. But I always have to fight my way through.

And, yet, I enjoy nothing better than to fight against odds and win. I can not account for it. But it is a fact.

Of course, I do not mean a fist fight, although if I am attacked, I never run away. The other fellow did that the last time it happened.

But I know the greatest fighter on earth. My mother. She fought against odds to give me life. She had to fight pain, suffering, disappointments, loss of blood, sleep, rest, peacefulness of mind and sickness before she saw me a month old. Every mother does that. Among the greatest generals in the history of the world should be counted in "Everybody's Mother." The greatest monument in the world should be erected to the memory of the "Unknown Mother."

My mother had to fight my inclinations. Everything she wanted me to do, it seems, fell upon deaf ears. I did understand her even when I was a month old; but I just was contrary. But she kept up the fight.

When I started walking, eating and talking, her fight became more intense. I had to speak her language; eat her food; and walk the distance she measured.

And, I know that she will fight for me even when I will be an old man. May God grant it be so!

And, who but a father in Israel knows the battle of life better! My father is always fighting to hold his own, including myself. He had to fight me to get me to school, to have me go to Hebrew school, to accompany him to the synagogue, to "daven," and to keep away from bad fellows. He was very particular about that. Of course, I never understood my father. But he knew what was good for me.

And, to-day, my own fight for life begins. At thirteen I am accepted as a full-fledged member in the House of Israel. I know I am too small for such distinction; I will have to fight to be able to stay in. And, I know I will win. May God help me win!

In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read about a rebellious son. When punishment will have been inflicted, our Torah tells us: "So shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

The Talmud tells us that in all the history of Israel in Palestine, it never happened that a son should be so rebellious as to deserve the prescribed punishment.

The punishment is ordered against the rebellious son, not on account of what he did, but on account of what he might do in the end. It was a protection for society.

But the environment of the Palestinian population was such a healthy one, that no boy ever, actually, became bad enough to dread his possible career of crime.

My dear parents, how can I thank you for your protecting hands! You were my guarding angels. You protected me against my own inclinations. I know the environment here is unlike the environment of ancient Palestine. Yet, thanks to your good advice, and discipline, I am now feeling the self-same pride in Judaism as everybody else does.

May Almighty God bless you, my dear parents, and you worthy assembly with His blessings from Zion, Amen.

L

תְּבָא

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: I have reached the climax of my youth. Good bye, fancy. Welcome stern realities of life.

Farewell, Childhood; How-do-you-do! Manhood.

I am but another passing shadow, not the shadow of a tree, but of a bird in his flight.

Some think the years do fly. It is not so. We fly. Some think they kill time. It is not so. Time kills them. Some think they do with life what they want. It is not true. Life does with them what it wants.

I am already thirteen years old. My father and mother, with joy in their hearts brought me hither to proclaim publicly my present status in the folds of our people, the people of Israel.

They are thirteen years older than they were at the time I was born. They moved on in their lives. So did I.

The wonderful thing about all is, that God intended that the passing of everything, even of life

itself should not be accompanied with pain but with good cheer. It is only because life is not accepted as God gave it, that certain things are accompanied by pain.

I left a free, careless, happy childhood behind me; I face a future full of responsibility, uncertainty, struggle, and hard work. And, yet, I am happy. I feel happy. I have no misgivings. Not that I have the I-don't-care spirit; but simply because man is an adventurer, and is never happier than when he embarks upon a strange venture, although it might require risking one's life.

In addition to changing my status, I accept obligations. The obligations facing me now are not concerning my physical, but my spiritual well-being, if such distinction actually exists.

My life is not mine to make of it what I want; God gave me my life. My parents aided me till this day. My life belongs not to me alone. I have no right to make a failure of it.

I would then hurt my father, my mother, my teachers, my relatives and my friends.

When a Jewish boy makes a failure of his life, he does harm to all the Jews. It is either a curse, or a blessing of God that we are all judged by the action of one.

This is in itself sufficient ground for being happy to-day. You, my dear parents, aided me till now. You now brought me to my people. They receive me in their folds on equal terms. Their aid will be of material help to me. Their example of being faithful and loyal to the Torah and its commandments is a source of inspiration to me. By following their example my life will be a useful one. In return for what my people are doing this day for me, I will make compensation by being a credit to them.

In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "And Moses and the priests the Levites spoke unto all Israel, saying: 'Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day thou art become a people unto the Lord thy God. Thou shalt therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and do His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day'."

These Verses are actually meant for me, on this day of my Bar-Mitzvah, as it was meant for all Israel of all times.

I will do the commandments of God, even as it is charged in the Torah, as was read this Sabbath.

And, as a newly-initiated member of yours, a member without sin whatever, I will conclude with another Verse of the Sidrah of this Sabbath:

"Look forth from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel, and the land which Thou hast given us, as Thou didst swear unto our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey," Amen.

LI.

נצחין

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say: 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say: 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?' But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

I am a young lad, after all; even though I have an equal share with all of you in observing the commandments of God. My knowledge of life, and my experience in the world is very small. I was born in America. And, I am an average American boy. I do not feel the stamp of exile anywhere about my make-up.

I often accompanied my dear father to the synagogue. In a measure I understand Yiddish. I studied Hebrew. But unfortunately my people Israel does not speak Hebrew but Yiddish. I re-

spect Yiddish, because it is the language my mother speaks to my father at home.

And, I often was amazed to hear the old and revered gentlemen, at the synagogue, speaking very ill about us American Jewish boys. They speak with a note of despair. They believe that Judaism has no future in America. They aver that the American boys do not care and do not want Judaism.

I have even heard that some of them think that you can not teach Judaism, or the Hebrew literature, or the Talmud to American Jewish boys.

I am sorry for these old people. They mean well, if their criticism is directed against some parents who do not care whether or not they have their boys and girls educated in Judaism; but to throw up the sponge, and say: 'Judaism will not live in America, because the boys and girls do not want it' is a bit selfish.

After they will have lived an hundred and twenty years, they think of taking Judaism along in heaven. But it would be a mistake. The Torah was given to the men upon earth.

Judaism is not going to die in America, because, please God, a respectable number of us youngsters will keep it very much alive; and we know how to keep things alive, and make things lively.

I think that the old people should better cheer up a bit, and not look down so much.

Every one who comes to these shores, and has an opportunity to visit an American Jewish home, his first word is, to inform the host and hostess that only in Europe it was possible to bring up children properly; that in America the children are Goyim.

Our Torah is not in heaven; it was given away, on Mount Sinai, by Almighty God, to His children upon earth; the Torah is not hidden across the sea, because it was given to all of the people of Israel, and there are some Jews in America, in Africa, and even in Eretz Yisrael.

The Torah is here, it is everywhere. Teach us and we will know it; teach us right and we will understand it; instruct us and we will abide by it; command us and we will obey. We understand discipline here in America, perhaps, better than the Europeans ever did, because we discipline our own selves. We also have a bit of *Derekh Eretz* here, that is we understand manners here.

The Torah is nigh unto me, it is in my mouth and in my heart to do it. I put on the Tephilin on my arm and upon my head, and think of the lesson they convey to me. They teach me that in my heart, and in my head, I can find the Torah, love it, think of it, study it, know it, remember it, and keep it.

May Almighty grant this day my supplication to give me understanding in full measure, so that I be able to pursue and practice His laws and commandments. May He bless my parents, and all of you, worthy congregation. May He send to Zion a Redeemer, speedily, in our own day, Amen.

LII.

ל'ז

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: In the Sidrah of this Sabbath we read: "And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel; 'Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt go with this people into the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.'"

I am starting out on the journey of life with very meagre preparation. I had but little time to prepare myself properly for such voyage. I am but thirteen years old. I even did not know of the need to be prepared for life's journey, as my father and my mother did all the planning for me.

I am being invested with certain rights and duties. I will henceforth have the right to call myself an Israelite, to be counted in as an adult in any congregation. I am no longer a minor in my religion. My duties are to observe the commandments of the Torah.

But this is merely a general outline of a road full of details, a general direction to a territory never traversed by me.

Each commandment has thousands of details, of which I have not the least conception, save to behold how others of among my brethren are observing them, and practicing them.

Some of my brethren, as I have been told, and as I have some times observed, have a happy way all their own, when it comes to practice Judaism. They do not give up all of the members of their body to God. Some give only their hand. By distributing alms, they consider themselves good Jews. They have Kosher hands. Others are happy because they confess that they are not ashamed of their Jewish name. They have Kosher names. Some give their feet to God. They go to every Jewish meeting. They have Kosher feet.

But there are not over many who say: "I am the Lord's. I belong entirely to my people, to the Torah, to the commandments."

They seem to fear something, to have a weakness all their own. They are not a very good example for us youngsters.

I was instructed to keep the commandments of God; I was instructed to believe in them; I was instructed to hold them in sacredness.

Alone I could never do it. There are such commandments that I am not at all obliged to fulfill; they belong to different groups, such as the Cohen, the Levite, the king, the land owner; many, moreover, belong to Eretz Yisrael, and can not at all be practiced in diaspora.

But I was taught to know that all Israel together, including the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael, when there will be a rebuilt Zion, can observe all of the six-hundred-and-thirteen commandments; and, being one great brotherhood in which one is responsible for all, and all for one, God credits every member in the House of Israel with the full quota of commandments.

It is, therefore, an imposition on the part of some of our brethren who take from us their share, and give us nothing in return. We are even at times called upon to pay for their sin.

When Moses had to give over the leadership to the young Joshua, he told him, at the very outset, "Be strong and of good courage."

Indeed, one is in need of strength and courage to face a hostile world as a Jew!

I know what that means for a young lad like myself. I feel the responsibility thereof. I know what I will have to face during my lifetime.

But I am happy. I will perform a sacred duty every moment of my life. In giving my entire being to God, to my people, I am dedicating my service to a cause which will be triumphant in the end, which will attain a goal no other race ever dared dream of.

I invoke the blessing of Almighty God, that He may shower them this day upon the heads of my dear father and mother, and upon all Israel, Amen.

LIII.

דָּאוֹתֵינוּ

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the portion of the Lord is His people, Jacob the lot of His inheritance."

"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, a howling wilderness; He compassed him about, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, hovereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, reareth them on her pinions—the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God."

These wonderful Verses of our Torah, read to us this Sabbath morning, tell the world of the beautiful romance between God and His people, Israel.

His people are the trustees of the world. Nations come and nations go, but Israel remains for-

ever. Israel is the portion of the Lord, Jacob His share of inheritance!

How many of my young brethren care to know this? Ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee.

I thank you, my dear father. You did tell me. I thank you my dear teachers, you did tell me.

I have a conception of the greatness of my people, the people which now receives me as a member on a basis of equality.

I was not tested. My fitness was not investigated. By being a son of my father and mother, and being of age, I am brought here, given every consideration and privilege, and admitted in the folds to be part of the inheritance of God Himself!

I know that my whole life will be a test of my fitness to be in such midst. I am admitted, but I will have to work hard to earn that title of distinction you now are investing me with.

But God is my father in heaven, as well as I am part of His inheritance upon earth. "He who comes to be purified receives salvation from Heaven." If one opens the door of righteousness even an opening as small as a needle-point, if he does it so by his own effort, by his own willingness to follow God's Torah, a door as wide as a court-

yard is opened for him to enter the path of righteousness.

I stand here, knocking at the Heavenly door, begging to be admitted among the hosts of faithful Israelites. I accepted the commandments. I am fulfilling them, as they are coming along my way. I am seeking the Wings of God's Shekinah, there to find protection against the many temptations of life.

I did not have to ask my father. He told it all to me long before I sensed the real beauty, glory, greatness and importance of Judaism.

And, standing here upon the holy ground, I pray to Thee, O God of my fathers: Grant my supplication this day. Give me power of understanding, wisdom to know, to learn, and to observe all Thy laws and commandments. Give my parents the reward they so justly deserve for having brought me up in Thy ways. Bless them, and the whole House of Israel, Amen.

LIV.

ברכה

My Dear Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen: We read in the Sidrah of this Sabbath: "And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death."

It is the last Sidrah of the Torah. We soon begin to read the Torah anew. The Torah never ends. It is like Time, infinite.

The Torah is God's own composition; His own Code for mankind to follow. I love the Torah. I was privileged to study it. The stories are heavenly; they fascinated my mind when I first heard them; and perplexed my mind when I studied them.

The laws of the Torah, are the true laws. All true laws are based upon the laws of the Torah. My native land, America, God bless it! is blessed, and is a blessing for all mankind because its laws are founded upon the laws of the Torah.

The Holy Land, the land of my fathers, the land of my dreams, of my soul, of my religion, will be re-established upon the laws of the Torah, as it was established first when the man of God, Moses, led

them safely out of the wilderness, and had Joshua appointed to bring them into it.

Moses is here called the “man of God.” He was the true example of what blood and flesh may become upon earth, when the soul conquers the evil in the body. Every one in the house of Israel is obliged to try and emulate the ways of Moses. We can cleave to the Ways of God, by imitating the righteous ways of the pious upon earth.

God was, indeed, good to me in bestowing upon me life on earth through my parents. They have carried out His will, in teaching me how to revere and worship Him.

I am now making my declaration of independence. I go henceforth alone on the path my parents pointed out to me. They will no longer be busy guarding my footsteps. My sin will be my own, not that of my father's. He will not be punished, if I err.

I reached the mile-post of my life which is marked in a language not yet mastered by me. The mile-post is a blank. I have to write out my own direction. Whatever turn I make now, will be marked on the mile-post I encountered on the day of my Bar-Mitzvah.

And so will I have to mark every future mile-post of my life. Here I desire to inscribe on my

thirteenth mile-post something that my father and mother should read with some satisfaction.

I dedicate my life to your honor. My journey will be accompanied by the image of your beaming countenances as I see them now. I will earn my living honestly, as you, my dear father, did. Your image will be my inspiration. I will refrain from doing a dishonorable act, as you my dear mother ever refrained from everything dishonorable. I will never do a thing that would cause you pain. Your image will be my inspiration for that.

Beneath that inscription, I desire to add a postscript of every important character, and it is addressed to my people the people of Israel. I will ever hold the flag of my people in my hand, high above my head.

And, before I start onward to another mile-post, I desire to pray:

O God of my fathers! I am now on an untrodden and unknown path; lead me in Thy Shadow, so that the scorching sun of sin burn me not; give me part of Thy light, so that the forces of darkness will not overwhelm me. I go willingly in Thy folds, under Thy banner; send along Thy angels to guard my footsteps that I do not go astray, that I reach my destination. I embrace Thy commandments; give me the mental strength

to understand them, and the physical strength to repulse any attack against them. I join the forces of Thy people Israel; send Thy messenger from heaven to redeem them from the lands of exile, so that their voice of Thy praise will be re-echoed once more by the hills of Judea, Amen.

